Celtic Illuminated Art.

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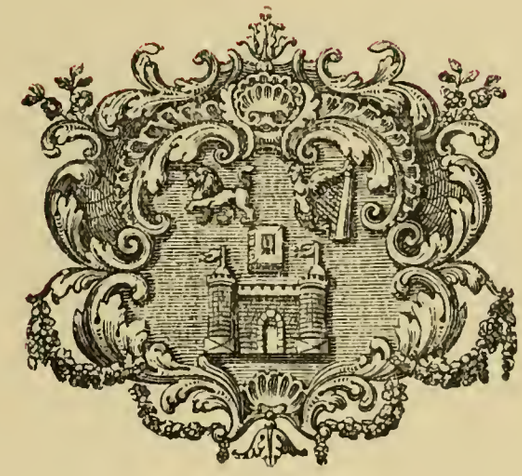
Celtic

Illuminative Art

IN THE GOSPEL BOOKS OF DURROW, LINDISFARNE, AND KELLS

BY

THE REV. STANFORD F. H. ROBINSON, M.A.



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INTRODUCTION.

EVERY nation there has been manifested, in varying degrees, a desire for decoration; and the objects selected for ornamental embellishment, together with the type of decorative design employed, afford an indication of the character and pursuits of a nation no less than of the position it has attained in artistic achievement.

The desire that books should be made beautiful is of great antiquity. Evidence of this is to be found amongst the most ancient civilizations: for example, an Egyptian papyrus is preserved in the Louvre at Paris containing a description of funeral rites pictorially adorned in colours, and embellished with gold.

The art of the medieval scribe was not wholly confined to writing the text of his work in well-proportioned and legible characters, but also included the graceful drawing in colour of the initials and other capitals. This, though not constituting all included in the term "illumination," yet in a great measure supplied the *motif* of that art, and in the Celtic schools was an essential contribution towards it. In the twelfth century the word "illuminator" was applied to the artist who decorated the leaves of a manuscript with initial letters and miniatures, not only executed in colours, but wrought with burnished gold; and so illumination, like the sister art of heraldry, employed both colours and metals. The craft of the skilled illuminator added

elegance and beauty to the art of the scribe, and was practised for the gratification of those who took pleasure in books, attaining to its greatest perfection in those nations which hold a place in literature.

Medieval illumination, with the taste which brought about the production of magnificent books, was due to the re-building of the city of Byzantium. The Emperor Justinian lavished his wealth on the erection of the Church of Sancta Sophia, formerly the Basilica of Constantine; and everything that could minister to the splendour of the new edifice and its furniture was procured. Thus arose Byzantine art, and with it the art of book-decoration reached a stage of extravagant magnificence. The greater liturgical books were executed in the most costly materials, and reflected the gorgeous splendour of the buildings for whose use they had been provided.

In the earlier centuries of Christianity the art of the illuminator was chiefly devoted to liturgical books. When the pages of these were beautified with more than simple ornamental initials, the illuminative adornment was a reflection of the architectural details of the church in which they were to be used. The panellings, arcades, and imposing tympana of the Byzantine basilicas are all produced in the designs which adorn the pages of the Gospel Books executed by the Byzantine scribes.

So, too, at a later period, when the classic cornice and the Romanesque arch were laid aside for a new style of architecture which acquired the name of Gothic, the illuminators of this Gothic school based their scheme of ornament on the striking feature of the interior of the Gothic cathedral—the stained glass which filled the traceries of the windows. This period of Gothic illumination expressed the feeling of the Gothic traceries, and was mainly a reproduction of glass-painting on vellum.

The art of the illuminator also incorporated some of the details of the minor arts practised at the period when the decoration of a particular book was executed. This is specially noticeable when we study the illuminations of the Renaissance period, during which the local industries and arts—including the delicate crafts of the gem-cutter and medallist—contributed to the varieties of rich adornment pervading this pseudo-classical style.

Although differing in various ways from other periods and styles of illumination, the elements of the ornament employed in book-decoration by the scribes of the Celtic school are not less a reflection of local taste and industry. The textile art of plaiting and hand-weaving supply the Celtic illuminator with the details of numerous patterns of interlaced ribbon-work, which also permeate the treatment of the forms of men, of dragons, of dogs, of reptiles, and of birds; the features in the metal-work—the dots, the whorls, the spirals, the discs, and the fretted patterns, together with the mosaic patterns and colours of the Cloisonné enamels, which jewelled the sacred vessels and shrines—all were transferred to the leaves of the illuminated vellum.

The everyday life of the Celtic scribe was in close contact with those other arts which were practised side by side in the same group of monastic buildings; indeed, some of the scribes and illuminators were workers in metal and other materials, and had at their command designs which were possible in different materials and by various processes. Hence the characteristics of this school pervaded all Celtic work, and are quite as evident in the illuminative ornaments in the Book of Lindisfarne, wrought by an Anglo-Saxon hand, as in a manuscript like the Book of Durrow, written and adorned by an Irish scribe.

Unlike the Roman and Byzantine manuscripts, in which the titles and initials were written merely in red or gold, the Celtic

artist completely covered the first page of each Gospel with the opening words, written in large letters, with initials of a much greater size, elaborately decorated, while the opposite page was devoted to a scheme of intricate tabular enrichment.

The notable feature originating and governing the ornament is the development of the initials; and as they are conjoined and involved in a maze of designs, their identification is rendered difficult. They form an absolute contrast to the small and legible capitals of the Classic and Byzantine schools. Indeed, so far as methods of embellishment are concerned, the Celtic school was not indebted to the devices of Continental calligraphy. Without vellum richly stained with purple, without gold and silver writing, without pages completely covered with gold, upon which were painted miniatures in body colour—without these more costly and extravagant accessories—the Celtic school of Ireland for centuries perpetuated a type of handwriting, and developed a style of ornament, whose influence was not confined to the British Isles, but reached far and wide over the Continent, and left, where it was introduced, an impression more marked than any other style of its time.

To Ireland is due the honour of having left its impress on European art at two remote and widely different periods. Such masterpieces as the Cross of Cong, the Chalice of Ardagh, or the examples of illuminative art in the Books of Durrow and Kells, recall to us the time when the Irish missionaries were exercising a humanizing influence on the Teutonic conquerors of the Roman Empire, and diffusing a style of illumination which was in a large measure the outgrowth and translation of a peculiar heirloom of the Celtic race—the art of enamel-work; but, a thousand years before the days of St. Columba, Ireland was already claiming a European position as a centre of metallurgic industry, and of the goldsmith's craft in particular. Scandinavian archæologists are

now recognizing that certain gold cups and ornaments, as well as bronze implements found in the Bronze Age deposits of Northern Europe, were made in Ireland; and so far as analysis can show, the gold ornaments seem to have been made of Irish gold. The late Dr. Arthur Evans considered that the museum of the Royal Irish Academy was richer in objects of native gold than any museum outside Athens, and that the pre-Christian Irish ornaments far surpassed the treasures unearthed by Dr. Schliemann at Mycenæ.

With the introduction of Christianity into Ireland came, not only a revival of the earlier art, moulded and developed in new directions, but also new ideas which were welded into the more primitive conceptions of pre-historic decoration. According to the Book of Armagh,* there were artists in the missionary party accompanying St. Patrick; the Tripartite Life confirms this statement, and mentions one of these, Assicus, as being "Patrick's copper-smith, who made altars and book-

*I am indebted to Dr. Gwynn for the transcription of the passages from the Book of Armagh given below:—

Lib. Ardmach. fol. 11 verso (col. 2).

//. ricio et faciebat altaria
Asicus sanctus episcopus faber aereus erat p at-
bibliothicas quas faciebat in patinos
sancti nostri pro honore patricii episcopi et de il-
lis iii patinos quadrotos uidi idest pa-
tinum in aeclessia patricii in arddmachae
et alterum in aeclessia alofind et tertium in
aeclessia magna saeoli super altare fe-
larti sancti episcopi.

fol. 8 verso (col. 2).

Portauit patricius per sininn secum
.l. clocos .l. patinos .l. calices
altaria libros legis aeuanguelii libros
et reliquit illis in locis nouis.

The following is a translation of the above passages:—

The holy Bishop Asicus was Patrick's worker in brass, and was wont to make altars and book-caskets, which he made for patens in honour of our holy Bishop Patrick. And of them I have seen three square patens—namely, a paten in the Church of Patrick in Armagh; a second in the Church of Elphin; and a third in the great Church of Saeoli over the altar of the holy Bishop Felart.

Patrick carried with him across the Shannon fifty bells, fifty patens, fifty chalices, altars, books of the Law, books of the Gospels, and left them in new places [i.e., newly founded Churches].

covers." This phase of Irish art has been overlooked, owing to the popular misapprehension that St. Patrick came alone—whereas he was the head of a regularly constituted missionary community.

The basis of the earliest Celtic ornamentation in Ireland is geometrical: the spirals, zigzags, circles, and dots, which were more or less common to all primitive races, belong to this period. The spiral came into European decoration at Mycenæ, which had close contact with Egypt. Many of these Mycenæan designs closely resembled the Celtic spirals; and possibly the source of these designs lay in the two thousand years' start which Egypt had before Europe awoke. The spiral system of the Christian period was the lineal descendant of the spiral design of the Pagan Celts. The drawing of these spirals was a matter of extreme difficulty. Dr. Keller considered the examples of their treatment in Irish illumination as real masterpieces, which furnished a splendid proof of the extraordinary skill of the drawing, and of the firmness of the artist's hand.* The spiral design was used in Ireland in several ways that would seem to indicate the distinct influence of the taste of the Celtic race upon this principle of decoration. One special characteristic of the Celtic spiral was the development of the connecting links which enriched the ornamental scheme with a series of graceful flamboyant curves. Some of these forms of spiral ornament were evidently derived from the application of gold wire to flat surfaces of gold or other metal. Many of the smaller linear and geometrical designs were also plainly suggested by the metal work, while a whole series of diaper and similar patterns formed with step-like lines can be certainly attributed to the beautiful specimens

* See Dr. Ferd. Keller, *Bilder und Schriftzüge in den Irischen Manuscripten der Schweitzerischen Bibliotheken*, in the *Mittheilungen der Antiquarischen Gesellschaft in Zürich*, Bd. VII, hft. 3, 1851; translated by Dr. Reeves in *Ulster Journal of Archæology*, Vol. VII, p. 212, sqq.

of Cloisonné enamel, in which art the Celt was peculiarly gifted. In enamelling in Cloisonné, the preliminary work on the metal equals in difficulty and importance the process of enamelling. The design is first of all outlined with a narrow wire, which forms small cells or *cloisons* to hold the enamels. The wires when shaped to the required pattern are then soldered to the metal plate or boss they are to adorn.

Books in the first instance must have come to Ireland from the Continent; and the beautiful form of letters for which the Celtic scribes became famous was derived from the Roman system, and doubtless reached Ireland through Gaul. The Irish manuscripts of the sixth and seventh centuries show a script in the same round hand as that in use in Italy and France during the fifth and sixth centuries, modified and with an added grace of form, which through centuries remained unequalled by any other school of scribes, and, owing to the isolation of the early Celtic Church, unimpaired by foreign influence.

From the same source, too, were derived those interlacings which form one of the features of Celtic art in Ireland after the advent of St. Patrick and his band of companions. Interlacing is found in Chaldean, Assyrian, and Greek decoration; and among the Romans its use was prominent, as their mosaic pavements bear witness. In these mosaic pavements, when animal forms were not treated, well-defined panels, filled with interlaced patterns, were the characteristic feature. Roman influence affected countries as far apart as Egypt and Britain; and in Egypt the Coptic textiles exhibit panels of these interlaced ornaments, which are simply remnants of the Roman art which gave so prominent a place to such devices.

Indeed, it has been demonstrated by Eugéne Müntz* that the Romans have made the most extensive and exclusive use of inter-

* "Études Iconographiques et Archéologiques." (Paris, 1887, p. 146.)

lacings, and that the mosaic pavements are the domain in which this *motif* of decoration has been maintained for the longest time, and with the most indisputable favour. Wherever it may have originated, it began to extend through Italy, and is found at Pompeii at the end of the first century. It developed rapidly from a simple border, until it came to occupy a foremost place, and in later examples it takes possession of the entire mosaic.

The Irish interlacings, although more intense in their execution, were simply the national version of a principle of decoration common to Eastern and Western Christendom alike. These interlaced ornaments have been regarded by some as if they were of Irish creation, perhaps owing to the fact that from the fifth to the eighth century, when mediocrity in everything artistic prevailed in Europe, these interlaced designs were elaborated and developed in Ireland to a standard of excellence and beauty never before attained, nor since surpassed.

For about a century and a half from the time of St. Patrick Ireland was more or less in a state of isolation, during which the principles of the decoration of the Pagan period were revived and enriched with the interlaced *motif* of the Christian period, which became naturalised, and by a process of mutual fusion were developed into a distinct and perfect system. But with the coming of St. Augustine a new era opened, and in it the isolation of the Celtic Church was gradually removed. The Celtic missionaries were brought into contact with contemporary Continental art, not only through intercourse with the Roman missionaries who came with St. Augustine, but also on the Continent by their own subsequent missionary endeavours. It is interesting to notice that the work of the scribes of the Columban community at Iona synchronised with the renovations of Justinian at Byzantium.

To this period, subsequent to the arrival of St. Augustine, may be attributed the introduction of other elements into the distinctive character of the illuminative style nurtured in Ireland. That the Celtic artists were receptive of these new influences is apparent in the Book of Kells; the pillared pages of the Eusebian Canons, with the arches resting on the double capital, characteristic of Byzantine architecture, and the miniatures of the Evangelists, are evidently derived from Byzantine sources. To this period, too, belong those monstrous forms of animal life, whose treatment in ornamental devices cannot be reconciled with the laws of anatomy. The same extraordinary animal forms are a conspicuous feature of early Scandinavian art, and in Celtic art were probably due to northern influences, no doubt fostered by the bardic lore in snakes, dragons, and other mythic monsters, which assisted the fertile imagination of the artist in producing those compositions of dragon, bird, and reptile forms, as marvellous as they are unique. The miniatures, and pictorial illustrations, if we may call them such, resemble the Greek icons: they are emblems or symbols of events and mysteries in the Gospel narrative, rather than any attempts at realistic portrayal. It has been suggested "that the devotional fervour with which everything connected with religion was approached by the faithful of the day cast around the illustrative efforts of the [Celtic] school a halo of sanctitude which made their absurdities disappear to a sympathizing and uncritical onlooker."* The figure-drawing is crude and shadowless, because it belongs to an art which did not aim at representation, but was essentially ornamental. There is no attempt at shading, and yet the conventional folds of the vesture of the Evangelists are arranged with the same masterly skill as the rest of the illuminative decorations.

* See Johan Adolf Bruun, "An Inquiry into the Art of the Illuminated MSS. of the Middle Ages" (page 23).

All these outside influences are so woven together as to achieve a complete consistency. It is only when subjected to a careful analysis that one of the elaborate embellishments in the Book of Kells, for example, proves to be a composite style containing many distinct constituents.

These general remarks on some of the more noteworthy features of Celtic art may assist the reader in recognizing the principles which prevailed in the book-decoration of the Celtic school between the sixth and ninth centuries, when it reached the zenith of its fame; but no amount of description can give a true idea of this illumination: it must be seen to be realized and appreciated. The details of the initial letters, of the pages of tabular decoration, of the figure-drawing, of the interlacings and other embellishments to which attention is called in the descriptive notes, can only be perceived by a careful examination of the collotype reproductions. The ornaments selected from the three Gospel Books of Durrow, Lindisfarne, and Kells, which are placed together in this volume, offer the student of decorative art an opportunity of studying the development of details, and the influences from outside sources reflected in their treatment. An opportunity, too, is afforded for comparison. To compare the details of the Book of Lindisfarne, for example, with those of Durrow and Kells will prove interesting, for it will be the comparing of the artistic achievement of the Anglo-Saxon disciple with that of his Irish teacher in the Columban community.

A brief account of the history and contents of these three Gospel Books may be of interest.

HE Book of Durrow contains the Four Gospels in the Vulgate version, an explanation of Hebrew names, the Eusebian Canons, the Epistle of St. Jerome to Damasus, the Bishop of Rome, and the "Breves Causae," or Summaries of the Gospels. The book acquired its name from having belonged to the important monastery of Durrow, in King's County, the head of the Columban institutions in Ireland, which was founded by St. Columba about the year 553. Later the headship was transferred to Iona, and still later to Kells. At the end of the Summaries of the Gospels there is a colophon* which reads thus:—"I pray thy blessedness, O holy presbyter, Patrick, that whosoever shall take this book into his hand may remember the writer, Columba, who have [for myself] written this Gospel in the space of twelve days, by the grace of our Lord." It is quite obvious that the beautifully written text of the Gospels could not have been executed in twelve days, and certainly not by a busy man like the Abbot of Iona.

The explanation is to be inferred from the note contributed by Dr. Abbott to *Hermathena*,† in which he has conclusively shown that the colophon is not the subscription of the actual scribe, but was simply copied by him from the archetype he was using. It would have been possible for St. Columba to transcribe hastily in twelve days, in smaller and more cursive characters, the text of the Four Gospels; and it is most likely that the Book of Durrow is a copy of such transcription as regards the text only. The interesting note recording its authorship and the circumstances of its production would naturally be incorporated in the copy by the scribe. The request made to the reader to pray for the scribe ("Ora pro me frater mi," etc,* is placed at some distance below the colophon, and plainly indicates this conclusion.

* See transcription of Colophon on recto of descriptive note on Plate I. † Vol. viii, p. 199.

The Book of Durrow probably dates from the end of the sixth or the beginning of the seventh century, and exhibits the development of the features of Irish art in the early period. The composition and colouring are simple. The numbers of the sections of the Eusebian Canons are not enclosed within columns or treated with decoration. The ornaments employed are mainly composed of spirals and interlacings, which, if not displaying the minute elaboration of the ornaments in the Book of Kells, are always effective. The book was originally enclosed in a silver-mounted shrine or cumdach made for it by the direction of Flann, King of Ireland, between the years 879 and 916. This has long since disappeared; but the inscription once borne by the cumdach is entered on a paper fly-leaf, and it is evident from it that this Gospel Book was regarded with veneration as a reliquary as early as the ninth century.

The following is a transcription of the notes written on the fly-leaf:—

"Inscriptio Hibernicis Literis incisa
cruci argenteæ in operimento hujus Libri
in transversa crucis parte, nomen artifi-
cis indicat; et in longitudine tribus
lineis à sinistrâ et totidem dextrâ,
ut sequitur.

"✠ Oroit acus bendacht Cholumb
chille do Flaind mace Maelfechnaill
do Righ eirenn [*sic*] la fa [*sic*] ndernad a cumdach
so.

"Flannius hic rex Hiberniæ decessit 8 kal. Maii et die Sabbati
ut in MS. Cod. Hibernico, quod Chronicon Scotorum dicitur,
anno æræ Xanæ vulgaris 916.
Hanc inscript. interpretatus est Ro. Flaherty,
19 Jun. 1677."

Which may be translated as follows :—

An inscription in Irish characters engraved on a silver cross on the cover of this book, on the transverse part of the cross, expresses the name of the artist; and three lines in length on the left and as many on the right as follows :—

Prayer and blessing of Columbcille [be] to Flann, son of Mailsechnall, the king of Ireland, by whom this cover was made.

This Flannius, king of Ireland, died 8 kal. of May, on Saturday, as [recorded] in an Irish MS. which is called Chronicon Scotorum in the year of the common Christian era 916. Ro. Flaherty interpreted this inscription, 19th of June, 1677.*

Little is known of the subsequent history of the book. It was preserved at Durrow until the time of the Reformation, and early in the seventeenth century collated by Archbishop Ussher. This manuscript was presented to Trinity College, Dublin, by its Vice-Chancellor, Henry Jones,† who was Bishop of Clogher from 1645–1661, and was translated to Meath in 1661.

* An entry lower down on the fly-leaf states :—

"Liber autem hic scriptus est manu ipsius B. Columkille
per spatium 12 dierum an. dom. 500."

Now this book was written by the hand of Blessed Columkille himself in the space of 12 days, Anno Domini 500.

Columba, however, was not born until 520.

† Haydn, "Book of Dignities," pp. 596 and 599.

honour of St. Cuthbert the Book of Lindisfarne—the earliest book of the Celtic scribes that can be dated with some degree of accuracy—was written, as we are told in the colophon,* by Eadfrith, the bishop, shortly after the death of that saint, which took place in the year 687. Eadfrith† died in the year 721; so that we know this Gospel Book was written between the years 687 and 721. In judging the date of a manuscript, many considerations enter into the account, such as the style of writing, the kind of ink, and the nature of the vellum. It is a matter of extreme difficulty to distinguish between the hands of the conservative Celtic scribes of the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, who were trained in those great monastic schools, perpetuating for generations a type of script which showed no traces of modification by foreign influence. Consequently Celtic manuscripts are peculiarly difficult to date with precision if we do not possess further data to assist us.

The writing and ornaments of the Lindisfarne Gospels are an eloquent testimony to the influence of the Columban monks in Northumbria, and afford evidence that the Celtic style of illumination had reached that high standard of excellence probably before the end of the seventh century. The Gospel Book is interesting from a liturgical aspect. Some years ago it was pointed out by a member of the Benedictine Order in the *Revue Benedictine*,‡ that with regard to the Festivals in the Calendar prefixed to each Gospel, the *use* of the Lindisfarne community closely resembled the liturgical cycle

* See Plate v, also note on p. xxiv.

† The following foot-note, written in Anglo-Saxon, is affixed to St. Matthew's Gospel:—"Thou, O living God, bear in mind Eadfrith, and Ethelwold, and Billfrith, and Aldred the sinner. These four with God's help were employed upon this book."—See George Waring, "Prolegomena, Lindisfarne and Rushworth Gospels," part 4, page xliv (Surtees Society).

‡ Abbaye de Maredsous Belgique, Nov.–Dec. 1891.

peculiar to the Church of Naples. A passage in the History written by the Venerable Bede* helps us to account for this remarkable coincidence.

Theodore of Tarsus, who was sent in the year 669 to be Archbishop of Canterbury, in his mission tour through England, was accompanied by one Adrian, formerly the Abbot of a monastic foundation on the island of Nisita, close to Naples. At Lindisfarne, Archbishop Theodore consecrated the new cathedral dedicated to St. Aidan; and there can be little doubt that Adrian brought over with him some of the books from his own monastery. The conclusion arrived at by the writer in the *Revue Benedictine* is that the text of the Lindisfarne Book was transcribed from a copy brought by this Neapolitan ecclesiastic who was the companion of Theodore. It is noteworthy that the Saxons who occupied the monastery of Lindisfarne, after the withdrawal of the Columban monks to Iona, faithfully retained the traditions of the illuminative art bequeathed by their predecessors, and did not introduce into their magnificent book that medley of Celtic and classical elements which in the eighth century became so common in the illuminative works of the Anglo-Saxon.

Unlike the Books of Durrow and Kells, the text of the Gospels is written in double columns. The Eusebian Canons are set out on pages of arcading of the same Byzantine construction as in the Book of Kells, but on a much simpler scale of ornament, more purely Celtic in its treatment. Besides the capitula of the lections to be read on certain festivals, the Book contains the Epistle of St. Jerome to Damasus, and Summaries of each Gospel, similar in character to the contents prefixed to the chapters of the Gospels which the English Bible has rendered familiar.

* Hist. Eccles., lib. iv, c. 1.

The Book written in honour of St. Cuthbert* was kept at Lindisfarne with the saint's body until the year 875, when one of the invasions of the Danes caused the community to seek some safer place in which to deposit both these treasures. The chronicler, Simeon of Durham, writing about the year 1104, records a story relating to the wandering of the Lindisfarne Monks in Northumbria. After several years of fruitless search for a suitable habitation they determined to cross the Irish Channel; but as the boat was put out to sea, a great storm arose, for the saint was angry at the removal of his body from his own land, and the fury of the waves was so great that the sacred volume was washed overboard. In much penitence, and in grief for their loss, the monks put back to shore. In a dream one of them was encouraged by St. Cuthbert to seek for the precious volume; and one day at low tide it was recovered, little the worse of its immersion; doubtless its preservation was due to the splendid jewelled cover in which it was then contained. Subsequently, having meanwhile found many resting-places, it was deprived of its jewelled case at the dissolution of the monasteries; later the book was rescued by Sir Robert Cotton, and is now in the safe custody of the British Museum.

* The following is a translation of the Anglo-Saxon colophon (see Plate v) written at the end of St. John's Gospel:—

"✠ Eadfrith, Bishop over the church of Lindisfarne, wrote this book in honour of God and St. Cuthbert, and all the company of saints in the Island; and Ethelwald, Bishop of Lindisfarne, made an outer case and adorned it, as he was well able, and Billfrith the anchorite he wrought the metal work of the ornaments on the outside thereof, and decked it with gold and with gems overlaid with silver and with unalloyed metal; and Aldred, an unworthy and most miserable priest, by the help of God and St. Cuthbert, overglossed the same in English, and domiciled himself with three parts. Matthew, this part for God and St. Cuthbert; Mark, this part for the Bishop; and Luke, this part for the brotherhood, with eight ora of silver (as an offering or entrance); and St. John's part for himself, *i.e.* for his soul, and depositing four silver ora with God and St. Cuthbert, that he may find acceptance in heaven, through the mercy of God, good fortune and peace on earth, promotion and dignity, wisdom and prudence, through the merits of St. Cuthbert. ✠ Eadfrith, Ethelwald, Billfrith, and Aldred have wrought and adorned this Book of the Gospels, for the love of God and St. Cuthbert."—See "Prolegomena, Lindisfarne and Rushworth Gospels," part iv, pages xliv and xlv (Surtees Society).

NCIENTLY the Book of Kells, which is now the most precious manuscript possessed by the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, was known as the Gospel or Book of Columcille, possibly because it was in the custody of the Columban community at Kells, but more probably because it was written at Iona in honour of St. Columba.

The Abbey of Kells, after destruction by fire, was rebuilt in the year 804. Prior to that date the Columban foundation at Kells was little known; but it soon began to acquire celebrity owing to the influx of monks driven from Iona by the raids of the Norsemen, and a few years later became the headquarters of the Columban community. Here, between the years 806 and 813, Cellach, the Abbot of Iona, took refuge; and we may conjecture that this famous book was brought from Iona by him, thus passing into the possession of the monastery at Kells. Here it remained until the year 1541, when the abbey and its possessions were surrendered by the last Abbot, Richard Plunket. In the year 1568 it was in the custody of Gerald Plunket.* Subsequently it was acquired by Archbishop Ussher, and, with the rest of his valuable library, came into the possession of Trinity College.

The manuscript—which is written in black, red, yellow, and purple inks—contains, in addition to the Four Gospels, a fragment of the interpretation of Hebrew names, the Eusebian Canons, Summaries of the Gospels, and grants of certain lands by Muirtach O'Laghlan and others to the Abbey of Kells.

In the absence of a colophon—which, no doubt, was written on one of the missing leaves—it is not possible to fix the date with precision;

*A Harbour-master of Dublin; possibly a nephew of the last Abbot of Kells. The Abbey was granted to Sir Gerald Fleming. Harris states ("Ware's Antiquities," p. 264) that the grantee was Sir Gerald Plunket; but Dr. Abbott assures me that, notwithstanding a careful search in the Record Office, he was unable to find an entry of any Sir Gerald Plunket.

but, having regard to the type of Hieronymian text it contains, it must be regarded as later than the Book of Durrow. The highly composite character of its illumination, and the minute elaboration of the various ornaments, far surpassing both the Books of Durrow and Lindisfarne, speak of a later period in Celtic art. There can be little doubt, therefore, that the Book of Kells cannot be placed earlier than the eighth century.

According to the "Annals of the Four Masters," the Book was stolen in the year 1006, and, "after twenty nights and two months," was found under a sod, without its jewelled and golden cumdach. It is most probable that it was the same book which Gerald de Barri saw when he came to Ireland as chaplain to John, son of Henry II. He saw it at Kildare, whither possibly it had to be transferred for a time for safety. He described it minutely, and with enthusiastic admiration, in the following words:—

"Of all the wonders of Kildare, I found nothing more wonderful than that marvellous book, written in the time of the virgin Brigid; and, as they say, at the dictation of an angel. The book contains the Concordance* of the Evangelists, according to Jerome; every page of which is filled with divers figures, most accurately marked out with various colours. Here you behold a majestic face, divinely drawn; there the mystical forms of the Evangelists, each having sometimes six, sometimes four, and sometimes two wings; here an eagle; there a calf; there a human face, or a lion, and other figures, of infinite variety, so closely wrought together, that if you looked carelessly at them, they would seem rather like a uniform blot than an exquisite interweaving of figures, exhibiting no skill or art, where all is skill and perfection of art. But if you look closely, with all the acuteness of sight that you

* The Eusebian tables or canons.

can command, and examine the inmost secrets of that wondrous art, you will discover such subtle, such fine and closely-wrought lines, twisted and interwoven in such intricate knots, and adorned with such fresh and brilliant colours, that you will readily acknowledge the whole to have been the result of angelic rather than human skill. The more frequently I behold it, the more diligently I examine it, the more numerous the beauties I discover in it, the more I am lost in renewed admiration of it. Neither could Apelles himself execute the like; and, indeed, they seem rather to have been formed and painted by a hand not mortal."*

The colours employed in the illuminations are in a wonderful state of preservation, having suffered less from fading than from scaling off. The colour tones are sombre and darker than the bright colour scheme in the Lindisfarne Book, and the pages of ornament have something of that charm that time gives to paintings in which the colours have sunk back into their canvas. The colouring reveals a profound knowledge of chromatic effect, and every page affords a lesson in the beauty of proportion and of colour. With reference to the colours, Professor Hartley says:—

"A very careful examination of the work shows that the pigments mixed with gum, glue, or gelatine are laid on somewhat thickly—there is no staining of the vellum and no mingling of tints. There is, however, as was pointed out to me, a painting of blue over a ground of green. The colours, which are not very numerous, consist of black, a tint resembling burnt sienna, a bright red, a yellow (largely used), a neutral green, an emerald green, two blues, a lilac, and a reddish purple. The yellow is much employed in filling up finely traced designs. The black of course is lampblack, or possibly fishbone-black, that is to say, charred

* "Giraldi Cambrensis Opera," vol. v (Topographia Hibernica), page 123. [Master of Rolls Series.]

This passage is translated by Dr. Todd, and is given by Westwood in his "Palæographia Sacra Pictoria."

fish-bones, or some other form of carbon artificially prepared, in a finely divided state. The reds, the yellow, the greens, and the blues could be obtained either—first, by grinding natural mineral substances; second, by grinding artificially coloured enamels or glasses. The very appearance of the colours is in favour of the first rather than the second, and altogether against a third possible process of preparation, namely, by the formation of those substances known as lakes, which are precipitates of vegetable or animal pigments in combination with alumina or lime. By making comparisons with ground minerals, I conclude that the bright red is realgar (arsenic disulphide, $As_2 S_2$); the yellow is orpiment, auripigmentum, the gold colour of the ancients (arsenic tersulphide, $As_2 S_3$); and the emerald green is malachite, an ore of copper (basic carbonate of copper, $Cu_2Co_3 CuH_2O_2$). The deep blue might be lapis-lazuli, the natural ultramarine, but I am inclined to think not, for the following reason: where the green is enhanced in beauty by an overlying coat of blue, the effect is that of a transparent pigment, such as could not be produced by lapis-lazuli. The reddish purple, I am of opinion, is either a finely ground glass coloured with gold, or a preparation similar to that known as the purple of Cassius. Its very sparing use must not be overlooked, and may be justly regarded as an evidence of its costly nature. It is not alone that it is employed in a few places, but it is put upon the vellum in very thin washes."*

A careful study of the drawing and colouring of the more elaborately decorated pages makes it quite evident that there were at least two artists engaged in the work of embellishment. There are certain characteristics that mark the master artist: his use of the parchment as one of his colours, notably on the page known as the Eight-circled Cross, where, owing to the nature of the parchment, the effect produced resembles the play of light upon jewellery. The red dot which is so frequent and prominent an element of decoration in many of the pages is by him given a quite subordinate place. In addition to these notable characteristics, Mr. de Burgh has called my attention to two other points. In the pro-

* Scientific Proceedings of the Royal Dublin Society (N.S.), vol. iv., 1885, pp. 485, 486.

duction of mauve, instead of applying a colour ready mixed, he seems to combine red and blue as he works, allowing sometimes the one and sometimes the other to predominate, and at other times laying the mauve on a ground of white; the second point is the raised enamel-like appearance produced by putting on colours in layers of differing thicknesses. A remarkable instance of this in three distinct levels occurs in the interlacing at the lower part of the initial letters on Plate XXXII. An examination of Plates XXI, XXX, XXXI, XXXII, XXXIII, XXXVI, and XL, which evince these characteristics, will prove interesting. His marvellous drawing is as wonderful as his delicate sense of colour. Compare, for example, the interlacing on Plate XXXVIII, executed by a minor artist, with that on Plate XXII, enlarged to four times its original size.

There are several emblematic devices continually recurring in the ornamentation, such as the cross, the fish, the peacock, the dove, the serpent, the trefoil, and the conventional vine. The scope of this volume does not admit of their consideration; but with reference to the Doubtful Portrait (Plate XV), it is necessary to allude to the peacocks standing on the vines which issue from two chalice-like vases. The peacock was used by the early Christians as an emblem of immortality, probably from the curious fancy that the flesh of this bird was incorruptible; and it was adopted by Christian decorators as a symbol of the Resurrection, owing to the bird's annual loss and renewal of its feathers. On each wing of the peacocks in the Doubtful Portrait there is a small disc marked with a cross similar to the Eucharistic cake in the Monogram Page (Plate XL). The vines issuing from the cups or vases, taken in conjunction with the peacocks, seem to be a symbol of the Eucharist.

The Greek acanthus and the Egyptian lotus are, according to

Ruskin, the roots of leaf-ornament in Christian architecture; but neither of these formed the basis upon which Celtic foliated ornament developed. In the Book of Kells two symbolic forms, those of the vine and trefoil, are the roots of the leaf-ornament, which, though the treatment shows considerable development, is of infrequent occurrence. It is noticeable that the conventional vine is found associated with the ornamentation of those pages which portray the Christ.

Westwood* has pronounced the portrait given on Plate xv to be that of St. Matthew, and that given on Plate xiii, which he regards as a misplaced folio, to be that of either St. Mark or St. Luke; but, as is shown in the note on Plate xiii, there is good reason for regarding that plate as the portrait of St. Matthew; and there is no ground for supposing that in the one Gospel Book there are two representations of the same Evangelist.

I desire to express my thanks to Dr. Abbott, Librarian of Trinity College, Dublin, for the use of several of the photographic negatives reproduced; for the facilities afforded me by him and the Assistant Librarian, Mr. de Burgh, for photographing and consulting the Books of Kells and Durrow; and to Dr. Warner, Keeper of the Manuscript Department of the British Museum, for similar facilities with regard to the Book of Lindisfarne. I have to record my thanks, too, to Dr. Lawlor, Professor of Ecclesiastical History, Trinity College, Dublin, for reading some of the proof-sheets; also to Mr. Gibbs, of the University Press, for his careful supervision of the work whilst passing through the press.

STANFORD F. H. ROBINSON.

Feast of Saint Andrew, 1907.

* See "Fac-similes of the Miniatures and Initials in Anglo-Saxon and Irish MSS.," p. 30.

PLATE I.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF DURROW.

Book of Durrow.

THE COLOPHON.

Rogo beatitudinem
tuam sc̄e praesbitere
patrici ut quicunque
hunc libellum manu te
nuerit meminerit colum
bae scriptoris . qui hoc scripsi
himet evangelium per XII
dierum spatium . gtia dn̄i nr̄i s. s.

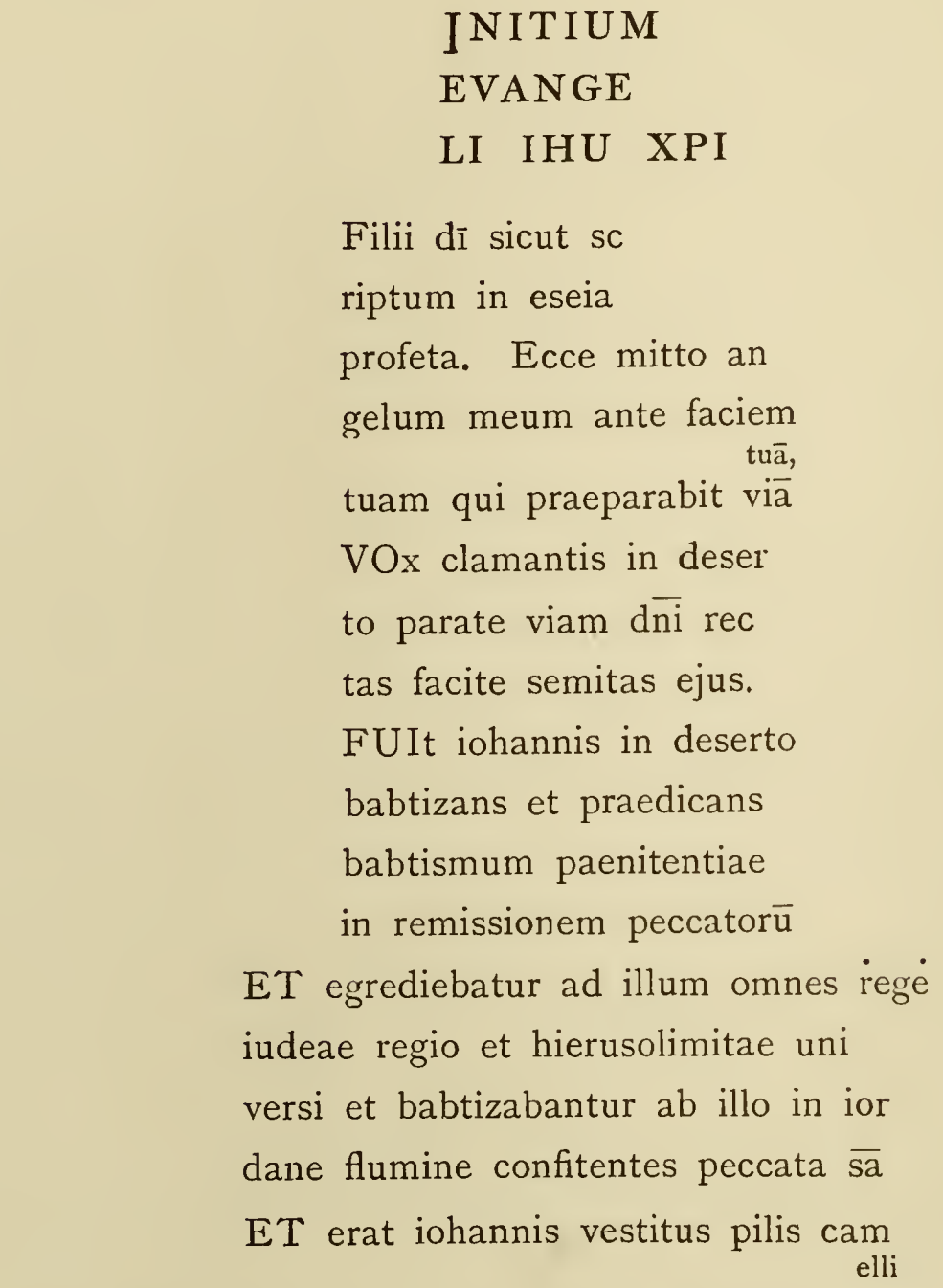
Ora pro me fra
ter mi dn̄s tecum
sit.

This note—"Pray for me, my brother: the Lord be with thee"—was added by the scribe who copied the original manuscript, and its colophon, of which the following is a translation:—"I pray thy blessedness, O holy presbyter, Patrick, that whosoever shall hold this book in his hand may remember Columba the writer, who have [for myself], in the space of twelve days, written this Gospel, by the grace of our Lord."

Book of Durrow.

ST. MARK'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER I, VERSES 1–7.



THE ornamental scheme of the illuminated page facing the opening words of St. Mark's Gospel affords decorative design of a character suitable to the craft of the art metal-worker. Most of the ornaments in this manuscript show a distinctive feeling for art, and offer many more possible designs for the artist in metal-work or in embroidery than the very elaborate and intricate illuminations in the Book of Kells. Although the penmanship and colouring do not manifest the extraordinary skill and delicacy of the drawing and colour in the Book of Kells, they have much vigour and character, and are always bold and effective.

secundum mattheum

Initium

sancti

euangelii

Ego quidem baptizo uos in aqua in
penitentiam qui autem post me uenturus
fortior me est cuius non sum dignus
corrigiam calciamentorum eius portare
ipse uos baptizabit in spiritu sancto
et igni cuius ventilabrum in manu sua
et purgabit aream suam et congregabit
triticum in horreum suum paleas autem
comburet igni inextinguibili tunc
uenit iesus a galilea in iordanem ad
iohannem ut baptizaretur ab eo qui
prohibebat eum dicens ego a te debeo
baptizari et tu uenis ad me respondens
autem iesus dixit ei sine modo sic enim
decet nos implere omnem iustitiam
tunc dimisit eum tunc baptizatus
iesus confestim ascendit de aqua et
ecce aperti sunt ei caeli et uidit
spiritum dei descendentem sicut
columbam et uenientem super se
et ecce uox de caelis dicens hic est
filius meus dilectus in quo mihi
bene complacui

PLATE II.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF DURROW.

Book of Durrow.

ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER I, VERSES 1–6.

QUONIAM QUIDEM MUL
ti conati sunt ordinare
narrationem quae
in nobis completae sunt
rerum sicut tradiderunt
nobis qui ab initio ipsi viderunt ET
ministri fuerunt sermonis visum est
ET mihi adsaecuto a principio omni
bus diligenter ex ordine tibi scribere
optime theofile ut cognoscas eorum
verborum de quib: eruditus es veritatem

FUIT IN DIEB
HERODIS REGIS
iudae sacerdos quidam no
mine zacharias de vice abia
ET uxor illi de filiabus aaron

THE tessellated and mosaic-like patterns in the rectangular sections of the illuminative page placed at the beginning of St. Luke's Gospel are worthy of attention. These fretted designs are traced in the natural colour of the vellum on a background of colour.

Notice the spiral and trumpet decoration enclosed in the letter Q of QUONIAM.

Reproductions of the letters Q and F in colour will be found on the Frontispiece.

QUONIAM

QUIDEM MUL

TI CONATI SUNT ORDINARE

NARRATIONEM QUAE

IN NOBIS COMPLETAE SUN

T RERUM SICUT TRADIDERUN

NOBIS QUI AB INITIO IPSI VIDERUNT ET

MINISTRI FUERUNT SERMONIS VISUM ET

MIHI ADSECUTO A PRINCIPIO OMNI

BUS DILIGENTER EXACTIUS ORDINE TIBI SCRIBERE

OPTIME THEOPHILE UT COGNOSCAS EORUM

VERBORUM DE QUIBUS ERUDITUS ES ORATIO

IN DIEBUS

HERODIS REGIS

IUDAEAE SACERDOS QUIDAM NO

MINE ZACHARIAS DE VICE ABIA

ET UXOR ILLI DE FILIABUS AARON

PLATE III.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF DURROW.

Book of Durrow.

ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER 1, VERSES 1–5.

IN PRIN
CIPIO
ERAT
VERBUM ET VE
RBUM ERAT AP
UD $\overline{DM}$ ET DS
erat verbum hoc er
at in principio ap
ud $d\overline{m}$ omnia per ip
sum facta sunt et si
ne ipso factum est
nihil quod factum est
in ipso vita erat et vi
ta erat lux hominum

THE ornament on the page facing the opening words of the Gospel is of special interest. It contains the only animal form introduced into the decorative designs in this manuscript. A careful examination of the characteristics of this ornament will show it to be the interlaced form of a dog resembling that of the Irish wolf-hound. On Plate IX the dog is treated in a similar manner. Notice within the circle the cross in the centre, and the three jewel-like devices, which are plainly derived from the patterns formed by the wires used in Cloisonné enamel work.

Notice the two forms of the letter P in the word PRINCIPIO. See note on Plate XXXII.

ÞRIÐ ÞRIÐ ÞRÓT

UÞRUÐ-ÞÓR

ÞUMGRAÐAR

UÐAMÐAR

Þrauðenðum hoðr
aðalmeðroðar
uðð[a]m omniþotis
sumþ[a]ðaðr[a]þ[a]r
norð fæðm[a]r
mhit quodþrudmi
þiþhumþrðaðr[a]
þrauðuðhoðmuðar

PLATE IV.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF DURROW.

Book of Durrow.

THE SYMBOL OF THE EVANGELIST ST. JOHN.

THE figure of the Eagle presents a scheme of form and colour which is similar to enamelling on metal. The framework of a continuous interlaced ribbon is broken up into symmetrical patterns by the colour treatment.

PLATE V.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF LINDISFARNE.

Book of Lindisfarne.

THE COLOPHON.

✠ EADFRIÞ biscop[b] Lindisfearnencis æcclesiæ
he ðis boc aurat æt fruma gode 7 sce
cvðberhte 7 allum ðæm halgum[gim ænelice] . ða . ðe
in eolonde sint . 7 EÐILVALD Lindisfearneolondinga[bisc]
hit vta giðryde 7 gibélde 7 sva hé vèl cuðæ
7 Billfrið se oncræ he gismioðade ða
gihríno ðaðe vtan ón sint 7 hit gi
hrinade mið golde 7 mið gimmum æc
mið svlfre ofgylded faconleas feh .
7 ALDRED[r] pbr̄ indignus 7 misserrimus
m[i]ð godes fvltvmæ 7 sci cvðberhtes
hit ofgloésade on englisc . 7 hine gihamadi
mið ðæm ðriim dælū . Matheus dæl
gode 7 sce cuðberhti . Marc dæl
ðæm bisc . 7 Lvcas dæl ðæm hiorode
7 æht[v] ora seolfres[v] mið tó inláde .
7 sci ioh dæl fhine seolfne[·/· fe his saule] 7 feover óra
seolfres[v] mið gode 7 sci cvðberti . ꝑ.te . he
hælbe ondfong ðerh godes milsæ on heofnv
séel 7 sibb on eorðo forðgeong 7 giðyngo
visdóm 7 snyttro ðerh sci cvðberhtes earnvnga
✠ EADFRIÞ . Oeðilvald . Billfrið . Aldred .
hoc evange dō 7 cvðberhto constrvxert.
ł ornavervnt.

THIS colophon is at the end of the book, and was written by Aldred the priest, who added the interlinear Anglo-Saxon glosses and notes. He gives the name of the scribe—Eadfrith the bishop—who wrote the book, the names of the artists—Ethelwald and Billfrith—who made its cover, and adorned it with gold and gems. He describes himself as 'prbr̄ indignus 7 misserrimus,' 'most unworthy and miserable,' and, in the note in the margin, tells us the names of his father and mother, Alfred and Tilwin, a good woman ('bonæ mulieris').*

There was a Bishop of Durham named Aldred, from 946–968. The glosses, which are in the Northumbrian dialect, were probably written in the tenth century by this Aldred, who became Bishop of Durham.

* 'Alfredi natus Aldredus vocor 7 Tilꝑ bonæ mulieris filius eximius loquor.'

IOHANNEN:

+ Trinus & unus dñs evangelium hoc ante
+ Matheus exore xpi scripsit
+ Marcus exore petri scripsit
+ Lucas deore pauli ap scripsit
+ Ioh. inprochemio deinde enutauit
verbum do donante atque rco scripsit
+ Eadfrid birc lindisfearnensis eccleie
he dis boc awrat eadfruma gode 7 cee
cyd berhte 7 allum dem halgum. da de
in eolonde wæs. 7 Edilwald lindisfearneolondingu
hit ute sidsyde 7 sibelde swa he wel cude.
7 billfrid se oncre he gyrmodade da
gehwilce dade utan on wæs 7 hit
hunade midgolde 7 midgimmum gec
mid wulfre of sylfes succonleaf feh.;
7 aldred þæs indignus 7 miserrimus
mid godes fultume 7 cee cyd berhtes
hit of gloesade on engliscre. 7 hine gehamade: uocon
mid dem dnum dæl. Matheus dæl
gode 7 cee cyd berhte 7 Marc dæl
dembisc. 7 lucas dæl dem hiopode
7 eehtona reolfnes mid to inlade.
7 cee ioh dæl fhine reolfne 7 seoven ona
reolfnes mid gode 7 cee cyd berta. fre he
hebbe ondrong denh gode milsie onheorenu.
reel wibb oneondo fondsteonz 7 sibsumo
wirdom 7 rnyssa denh cee cyd berhtes eapnumz
+ Eadfrid. oedilwald. billfrid. aldred.
hoc euangl do cyd berhto constituxerunt;

meos fratres
voco salvete;

sirete e
sqsvie
vonvl diu
sæcyla con
en

ofmode petrus awrat
ofmode pawles awrat
indæzil nisi tiferas riddu nocsecede 7 gyrsumt
pond mid gode gesunde 7 halges gastes 7 midgodes geseon
mæsse awrat ioh.
+ þæs indignus 7 miserrimus
+ ealle

PLATE VI.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF LINDISFARNE.

Book of Lindisfarne.

PAGE WITH DECORATED CROSS.

THIS page contains one of the most effective pieces of ornament in the St. Cuthbert's Gospels. The graceful design of the cross stands out on a background of interlaced bird-forms. The birds are evidently sea-birds of the same genus as those depicted in the Quoniam page (Plate VIII.). More regularity and repetition are apparent in this elegant ornament than on a similar page in the Book of Kells, containing as elaborate decoration.

Observe how the ornament contained in the circle in the centre of the cross is divided into four quadrants. Notice, too, the absolute identity of the patterns in the background; those below the arms of the cross are repeated four times, those above twice.

The six small circles on the cross enclosing those enamel-like patterns (which are of such frequent occurrence in the Book of Kells) give the effect of jewels or brilliant enamels set in the midst of interlacing, as striking in its symmetry as in its beauty.

There is a similar page of ornament at the commencement of each Gospel. The treatment shows the same repetition of the various portions of the decorative designs, in all of which an exquisite sense of beauty is apparent.

PLATE VII.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF LINDISFARNE.

Book of Lindisfarne.

ST. MARK'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER I, VERSES 1, 2.

INITIUM
EVAN
GE LII IHU
XPI FILI DI SICUT
SCRIBTUM EST
IN ESAIA PROPHETA

NOTICE the grace of the spiral and trumpet ornaments, and the dogs in two of the decorative sections of the letter N next to the letter T. The fretted patterns in the letter I are worthy of examination, particularly those adjoining the letters GE, which are of a different type from those found in the Book of Kells.

Observe the form of the letters: P resembles B in the words XPI and PROPHETA; but the form of the letter B in SCRIBTUM has no affinity to the P in XPI. See note on Plate XXXII.

At the end of St. John's Gospel (see Plate v) it is recorded that St. Mark's Gospel was written at the dictation of St. Peter—"✠Marcus ex ore Petri scrīps." The testimony of the early Church to the fact that St. Peter's teaching was the basis of the second Gospel is unanimous.

PLATE VIII.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF LINDISFARNE.

Book of Lindisfarne.

ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER I, VERSE 1.

QUONIAM
QUIDEM
MULTI CONATI SUNT ORDINARE NARRATIONEM.

NOTICE within the circular ornaments of the letter Q the peculiar twisted device, somewhat like a star-fish in appearance, and possibly evolved from the trumpet pattern. This distinctive ornament, although varying somewhat in form, is at once recognized on the In Principio and Christi pages (Plates IX and X). It is not found in the Book of Kells or in the Book of Durrow, although it forms part of the decoration on the Tara Brooch.

Observe on the right-hand side the dog's head and foot turning in towards the word NARRATIONEM.

The words "✢ Lucas de ore Pauli ap̄ scr̄ips" (see Plate V) state that St. Luke recorded the Gospel which Paul the Apostle preached. This is constantly affirmed by the early Fathers.

With regard to St. Matthew's Gospel, the words "✢ Matheus ex ore Xp̄i scripsit" probably refer to the fact that St. Matthew recorded what he himself heard from the lips of Christ.

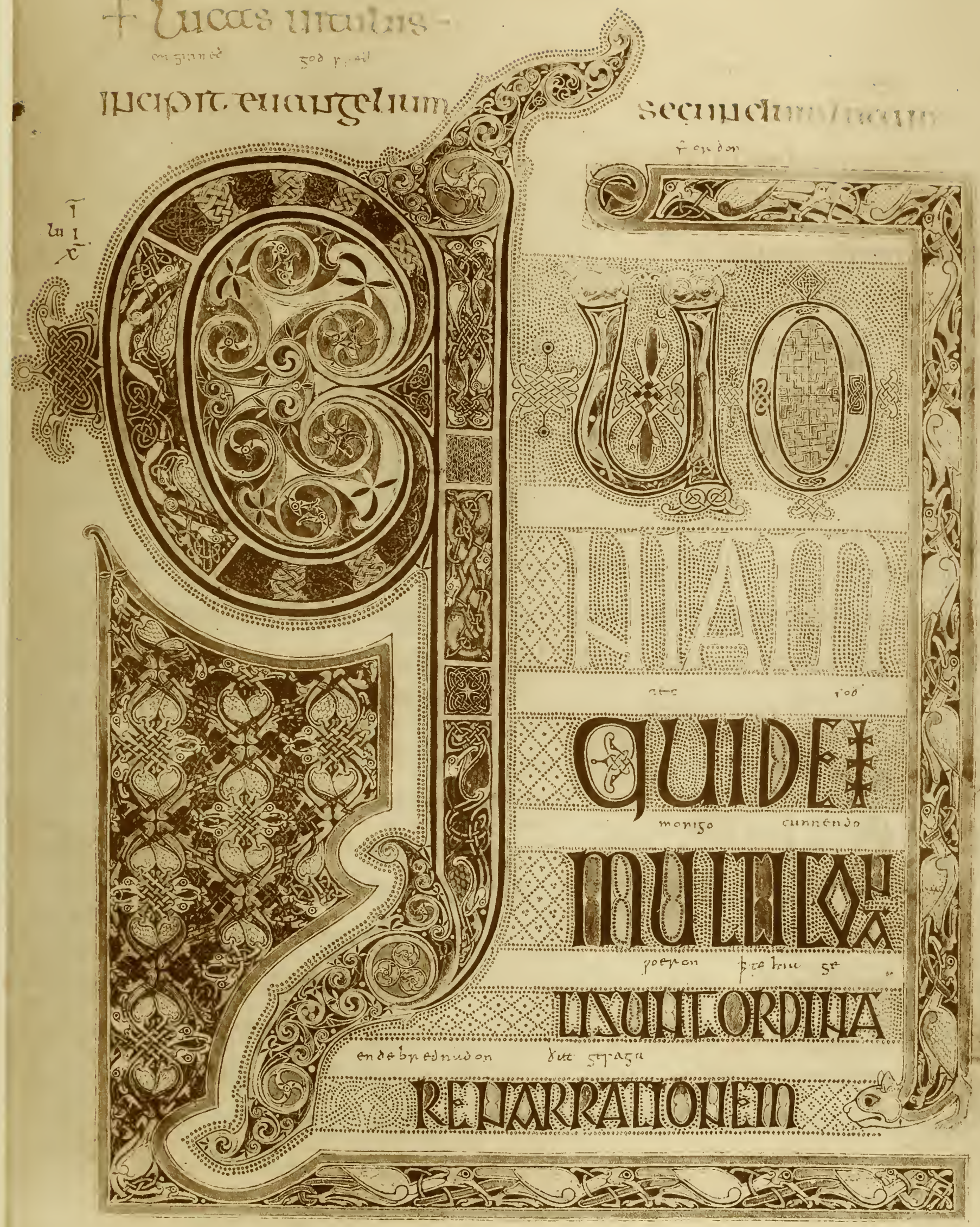

QUIDEM
MULTOS
LIBUIT ORDINA
RE NARRATIONEM

PLATE IX.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF LINDISFARNE.

Book of Lindisfarne.

ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER I, VERSE 1.

IN PRIN

CIPIO

ERAT VERBUM

ET VERBUM ER$^{A}_{T}$

APUD $\overline{DM}$ ET $\overline{DS}$

WITH the exception of three angular ornaments enclosing forms of birds, the dog, alternated with interlaced work, occupies the sections of the Monogram IN. Notice the extreme beauty of the step-like pattern in the diamond-shaped ornaments. In the original the colouring causes them to stand out like brilliant enamels. Notice too (at the top of the letter I, and the top and bottom of the letter P) the varieties of the starfish-like ornament alluded to in the note on Plate VIII. Observe the human head forming the terminal of the letter C in the word PRINCIPIO; it is the only occurrence of the human form in the illuminative ornament of this manuscript: the only other forms of animal life are those of the dog and bird, the latter being of the seagull type. In the ascending stroke of the conjoined letters IN notice the interlaced dog-forms in the section below the diamond-shaped ornament; they resemble in *motif* and treatment the dog decoration on Plate IV of the Book of Durrow.

The words "✠ Ioh̄ in prochemio deinde eructuavit verbum Do donante et Spū Scō scr̄ips" (see Plate v) describe this Gospel, and state that St. John wrote it by the help of God and the Holy Spirit.

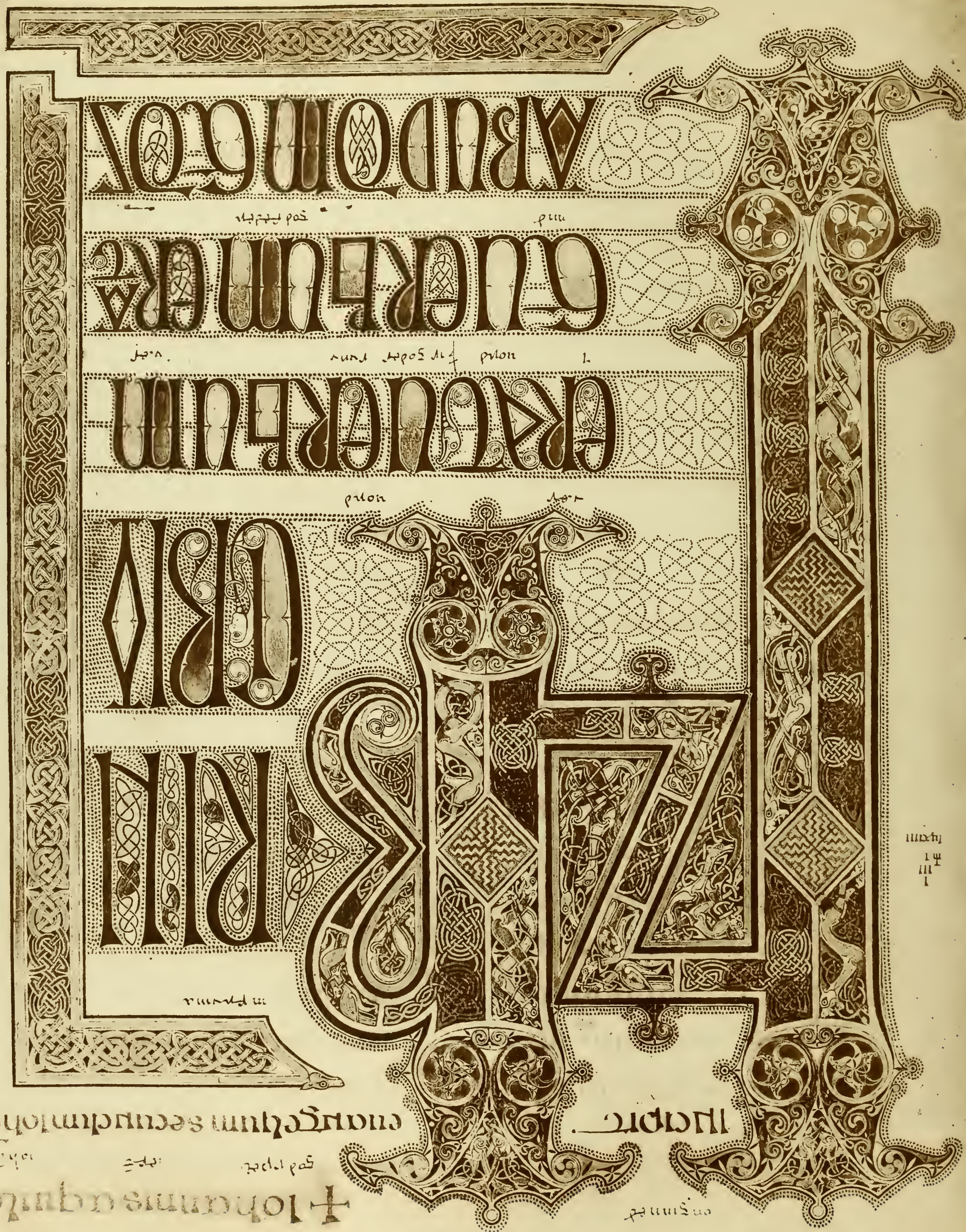


PLATE X.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF LINDISFARNE.

Book of Lindisfarne.

ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER I, VERSE 18.

XPI

AUTEM GENE

RATIO SIC ERAT CUM

ESSET DESPONSATA

MATER EIUS MARIA IOSEPH

THIS Monogram page has much grace and symmetry, but does not present as much variety in the treatment of its ornament as the In Principio page. The scheme of bird ornament elaborated on the letter X will repay careful examination. The corresponding page in the Book of Kells, containing only the Monogram XPI, with the words 'autem generatio,' is the most elaborate piece of illumination in Celtic art.

PLATE XI.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ONE OF THE TABLES OF THE EUSEBIAN CANONS.

THE Eusebian Canons are set out in a series of pages of Byzantine arcading, elaborated with Celtic ornament, and decorated with the Evangelical symbols, which are treated with the greatest variety in each table.

Ammonius of Alexandria, who lived early in the third century, prepared a sort of Harmony of the Gospels. Taking St. Matthew as a basis, he marked out sections, and, numbering these sections, he placed their numbers in the margin of the text, and beside them the numbers of the parallel passages in the other three Gospels. Hence the sections indicated by these numbers were designated the Ammonian sections.

Eusebius, the great historian, who was born at the latter end of the third century, adopted the plan of drawing up ten tables (κάνονες) or canons, of which the first contains passages common to the four Gospels; the second, third, and fourth, those common to three of the Gospels; the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth, those common to two of the Gospels; and the tenth, those passages peculiar to one Gospel.

The work of Ammonius suggested to Eusebius the idea of numbering the sections on a more convenient principle, and placing them in these ten tables, called, after their originator, the Eusebian Canons.

The numbers of the sections are not entered on the pages of the Gospels, as they are in the Books of Durrow and Lindisfarne; but a later hand has inserted them in the first couple of pages of St. John's Gospel.

Notice the intertwined figures in the arcading, also the symbol of St. Matthew holding a budding sceptre, and that of St. John holding a book.

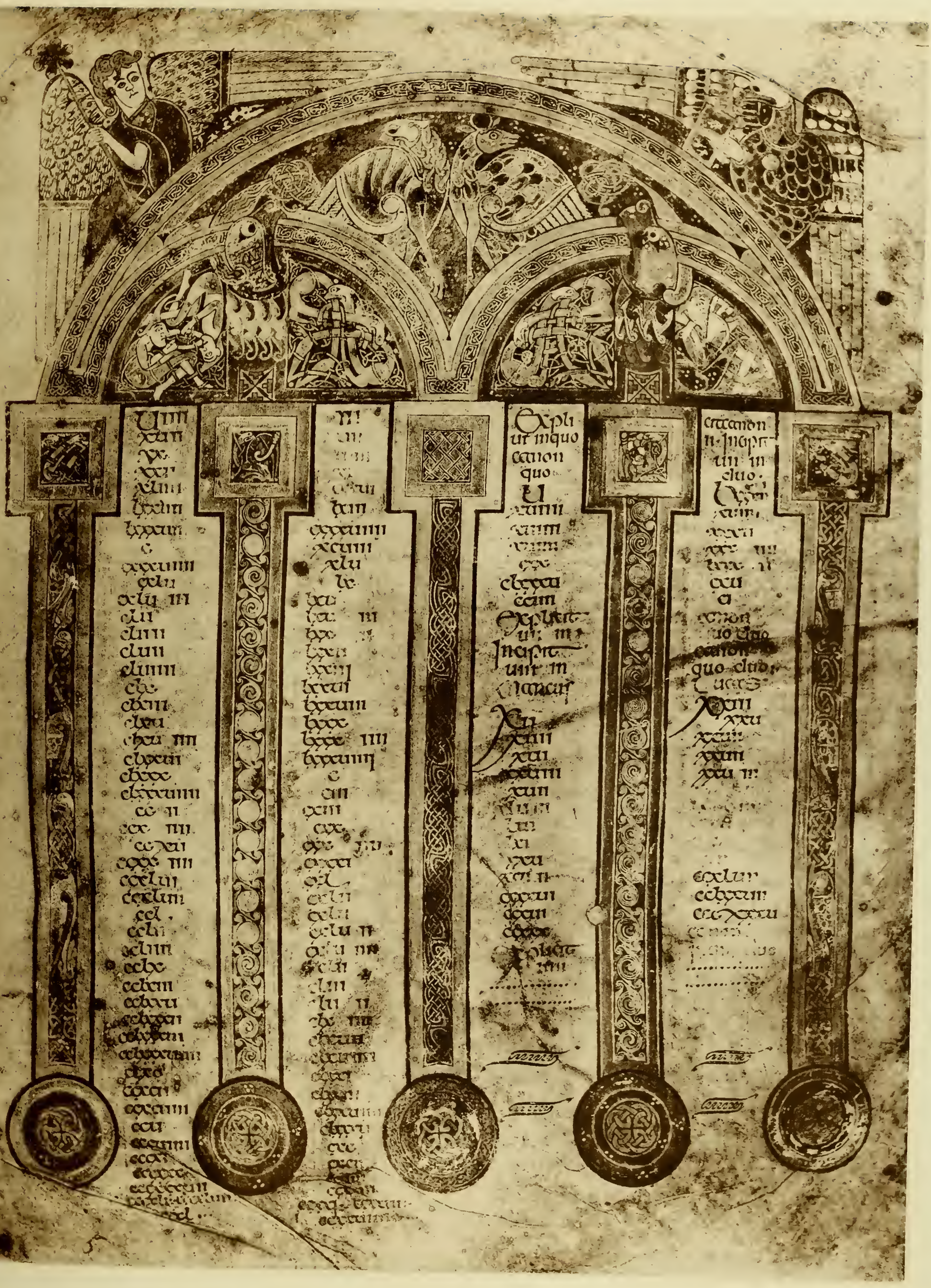


PLATE XII.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

SYMBOLS OF THE FOUR EVANGELISTS.

IN the original there are three full pages devoted to the illustration of the four Evangelical symbols —The Man (St. Matthew), the Lion (St. Mark), the Ox (St. Luke), and the Eagle (St. John). One of these pages Professor Westwood considered unequalled in Celtic Art.* The Man is assigned to St. Matthew, because he brings out Christ's human character; the Lion to St. Mark, because he sets forth the power and royal dignity of Christ; the Ox, the sacrificial victim, to St. Luke, because he illustrates the Priesthood of Christ; and the Eagle to St. John, because, as St. Augustine writes, "he soars to heaven as an eagle . . . . . and gazes on the light of immutable Truth with a keen and steady ken."

Both in the treatment and type of the figures there is much which resembles Egyptian work. Notice in the right hand of the symbol of St. Matthew the cruciform sceptre similar to the budding sceptre held by one of the angels in the Monogram page (see Plate XLIV). Observe also the four human figures on the left in the angle of the framework at the top. One of the rectangles in the border of the Monogram page (see Plate XLII) contains four human forms treated in a similar manner.

There is an illuminated page of the four Evangelical symbols in the Book of Durrow, showing an acquaintance with a very old tradition which gave the symbol of the Eagle to St. Mark, and the Lion to St. John. This is the order in which St. Irenæus gives them; but St. Jerome gives the Lion to St. Mark, and the Eagle to St. John.

* See Dr. Abbott's "Celtic Ornaments from the Book of Kells," Plate XXXVII.

PLATE XIII.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

PORTRAIT OF THE EVANGELIST ST. MATTHEW.

THE pictorial pages representing the Evangelists or their symbols, as far as the figure-drawing is concerned, are evidently derived from Byzantine sources, though the details of the framework in which they are set are Celtic.

These portraits of the Evangelists and the pages containing the Eusebian Canons illustrate the state of development reached by Celtic ornamentation, when it had the capacity to absorb outside influences and give them back again with the freshness born of native ingenuity. The thrones depicted behind the Evangelists are reminiscences of those to be seen on Roman consular diptychs. Observe in the spandrels of the arch the fan-shaped ornament closely resembling the flabellum—a ceremonial fan used in the Eastern Church to keep insects from alighting on the altar. In one of the pages containing the symbols of the four Evangelists these fans are introduced with pendent bells attached, similar to those in use in the Coptic Church for protecting the Eucharistic elements. Notice the symbol of St. Mark at each side of the nimbus round the Evangelist's head, while those of St. Luke and St. John appear at each side of the throne. The absence of the symbol of St. Matthew—taken in conjunction with the presence of the symbols of the other three—points to the portrait being that of the Evangelist himself. The vesture on the figure probably represents the ecclesiastical vestments in use in the Celtic Church in the eighth century.

PLATE XIV.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

PORTRAIT OF THE EVANGELIST ST. JOHN.

THIS pictorial page represents St. John sitting in a chair, with a quill in his right hand, and with an ink-pot close to the chair and near his right foot.

The nimbus about the head of the Evangelist is of much larger dimensions than usual, and remarkable for the combination of ornament employed. The outer circle, intersected by three large discs, encloses a series of ingeniously interlaced animal forms; and the inner circle, surrounding the Evangelist's head, is filled up with those inlay or mosaic-like patterns alluded to in the Introduction. The three discs also contain this ornament, and produce an effect in many respects resembling that of enamel work.

Observe, outside the framework, the head, the hands, and the feet of another figure—evidently a representation of Christ: notice the nail held in each hand. In the past, at some unrecorded date, the head was cut off by the binder, who is also responsible for the mutilation of the decoration on several of the folios containing the more pictorial and elaborate schemes of ornament.

PLATE XV.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

THE DOUBTFUL PORTRAIT.

THE decoration of this page abounds in interlaced and spiral designs, as wonderful in their conception as in the skill displayed in their execution. The framework contains a continuous series of intertwined animal forms, and will repay a careful examination: notice the delicate skill evinced in the treatment of the birds (probably peacocks) in the two semicircles on the middle of the outer sides of the frame, and also in that of the trumpet-patterns in the two squares from which the arch springs. The two discs touching the feet of the figure, in the designs they exhibit, are remarkable in their close resemblance to the enamel ornaments so characteristic of the art of the Celtic metal-worker. The two peacocks standing on the vines which issue from two vases or cups of chalice-like form have already been noticed in the Introduction.

The figure, at first sight, appears to be standing; but the two ends of the cushion (blue, dotted with white in triangles), seen at the sides of the figure below the elbow, indicate a seat supporting it. The left hand is covered, and holds a book, while the right hand* rests upon the book, with the first and second fingers extended in (what appears to be) the act of benediction. The rectangular spaces on each side are devoted to the representation of four angelic beings, one of whom is holding a foliated rod. The whole general design of the drawing, and the elaboration of the interlaced details, render this page one of special interest.

Gerald Plunket wrote in the spandrels of the top of the arch the words JESUS CHRISTUS.

The presence of the cross above, the colour of the vestments, the chalice-like cups, the vine, the peacock, the four angelic beings give grounds for this ascription.

* The subjects of Plates XIII and XV have, in the process of reproduction, been inadvertently reversed.

PLATE XVI.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

Chapter xxvi, Verse 30.

THIS is a representation of the arrest of Jesus Christ described in verse 50 (Tunc accesserunt, et manus iniecerunt in Jesum et tenuerunt eum). The writing at the top of the folio is by Gerald Plunket, whose explanation of the picture is that it represents the ministry of Angels during the Agony in the Garden. But the figures have little resemblance to any of the representations of Angels contained in the Book. The crosses of Clonmacnoise and Monasterboice afford examples of similar portrayals of this scene. Above the head of Christ are the words :—

et ymno dicto
exierunt
in montem oliveti.

Notice the two large heads of dogs. Possibly the illuminator was making an allusion to Psalm xxii, verse 16 ('Dogs have compassed me . . .').

PLATE XVII.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER XXVI, VERSES 11–15.

est in me. Semper pauperes habe
bitis vobiscum me autem non sem
per habebitis
Mittens enim haec unguentum
hoc in corpus meum ad saliendum
me fecit
Amen dico vobis ubicumque
praedicatum fuerit hoc
evangelium in toto orbe narrabiatur
Et quod fecit haec in memoriam
ipsius
Tunc abiit unus de duodecim
ad principes sacerdotum
qui dicitur Iudas Scarioth
Et ait illis quid vultis mihi
dare, et ego vobis eum tradam
At illi constituerunt ei xxx

This plate, and the two following, are specimens of the ordinary text, exemplifying the manner in which the initials of all the sentences throughout the Gospels are artistically treated.

esc mme semper pauperes habe
bitis uobiscum me autem non sem
per habebitis

Mittens enim haec unguentum
hoc in corpus meum ad sepeliendum
me fecit

Amen dico uobis ubicumque
praedicatum fuerit hoc
euangelium in toto orbe narrabitur
quod fecit haec in memoriam
ipsius

Hic abiit unus de duodecim
qui dicebatur iudas scarioth
aut illis qui dixerunt mihi
quare hoc unguentum non
uenit trecentis denariis

PLATE XVIII.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS

Book of Kells.

ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER XXVI, VERSES 15–21.

argenteos. Et exinde que rebat
oportunitatem ut eum traderet.
Prima autem die azemorum
accesserunt discipuli ad ihm̄
dicentes ubi vis paremus tibi man
ducare pacha
At ihs̄ dixit ite in civitatem
ad quendam et dicite ei magis
ter dicit tempus meum prope est
Apud te facio pascha cum disci
pulis meis. Et fecerunt dis
cipuli sicut praecipit illis ihs̄
et paraverunt pascha.
Vespere autem facto discum
bebat cum ·xii· discipulis suis
Et edentib: illis dixit· Amen
dico vobis quia unus.

uerbo tempus meum prope est
Appropinquauit uenit tempus
quando uisitabo populum meum
Querimonie
populus meus · Querimonie dis
cipuli sue prophetias ihū ·
Preualuerunt pusillanimes
Respexerunt ydolum
debent cum eis dispudiosis
edentib: iustorum Amen
tico uobis quibus

PLATE XIX.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER XXVI, VERSES 21–25.

vestrum me tradet
Et contristati sunt valde et
coeperunt singuli dicere
numquid ego sum dn̄e? At ipse
respondens ait qui intinguit
mecum manum in parabside
hic me tradet. Et filius quidem
hominis vadit sicut scriptum
est de eo
Vae autem homini illi per quem
filius hominis tradetur
bonum erat ei si non natus fu
isset homo ille.
Respondit autem iudas qui tra
diturus erat eum et dixit
ei numquid ego sum rabbi• Ait illi
ihs̄ tu dixisti.

uelum me- ꝛaac-

Confitebuntur celi

coeperunt singulu dicere-

quando e o sunt hic. Amen

respondens ac Quintus

oecum mundum dixit

hic mundus quide

homines sunt sapien

PLATE XX.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER XX, VERSES 18–22.

. . . . . et filius hominis tradetur prin
cipibus sacerdotum et scribis et
condempnabunt eum morte et tra
dent eum gentibus ad deludendum
et flagillandum et crucifigendum
et tertia die resurget
Tunc accessit ad eum mater fili
orum Zebedei cum filís suis ad
orans et petens aliquid ab eo qui
dixit ei quid vis· Ait illi dicunt sede
. . . .

Notice the horse and rider. There is another example of a horse and rider in St. Luke XVII. 2–7, in which the horseman is leading his steed. See Dr. Abbott's "Celtic Ornaments from the Book of Kells," Plate XLIII.

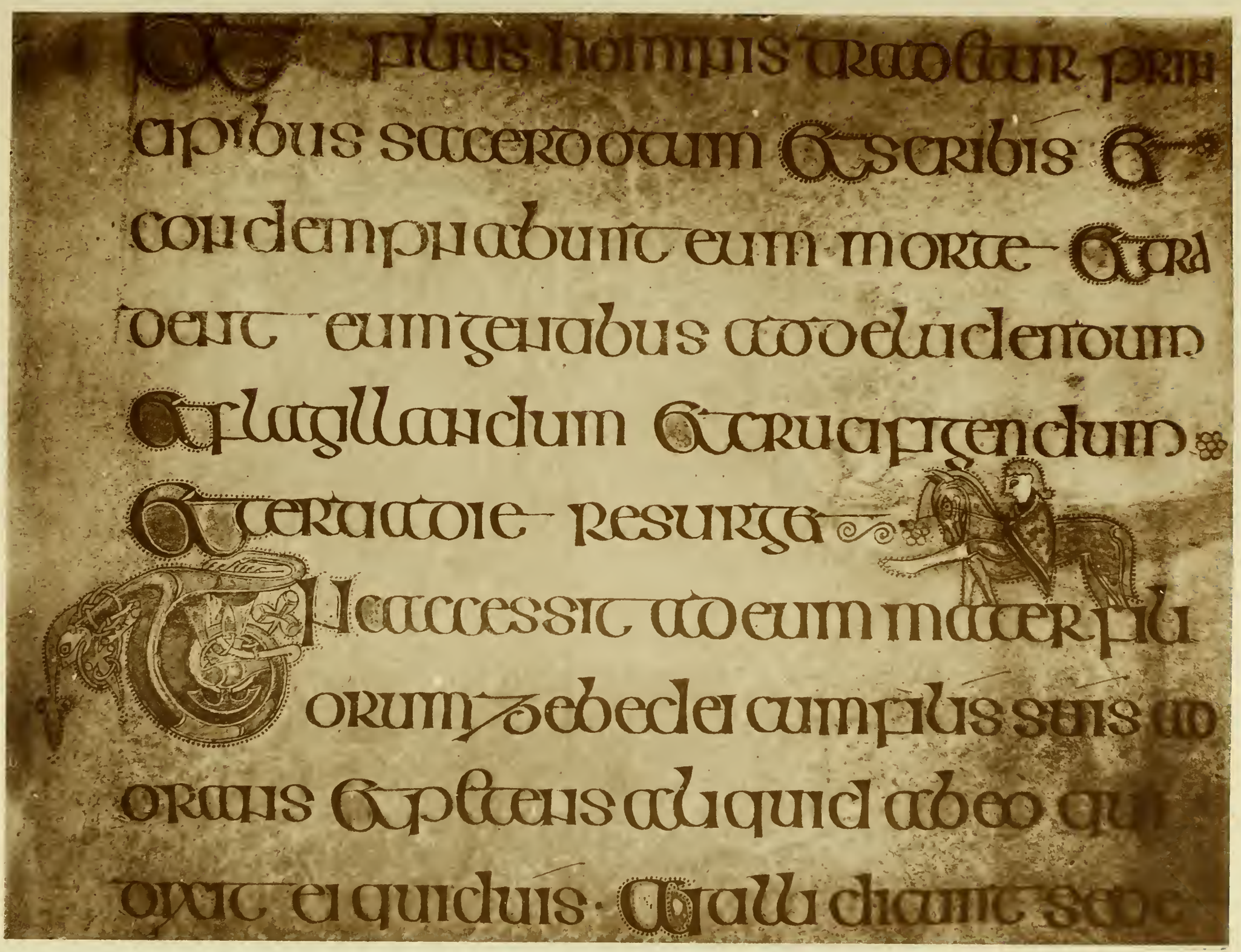


PLATE XXI.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER III, VERSE 22.

QUI FUIT.

THE first page of the Genealogy in St. Luke's Gospel—'QUI Fuit Heli.' The Genealogy occupies five pages; the form of the Q and the ornamental design are different for each page. The continuous interlacing of the Q's, and the beauty and minuteness of the ornament, are worthy of attention. This can be more fully realized, and the accuracy of the drawing better appreciated, by examining the enlargement of three of the Q's given on the next plate (XXII). The B's of the Beatitudes are similarly intertwined.

The words which precede the Genealogy are:—

facta est tu es filius meus dilectus in te
bene complacuit mihi.
Et ipse ihs̄ erat incipiens quasi an
norum tringinta ut putabatur filius
ioseph.

Then follow:—

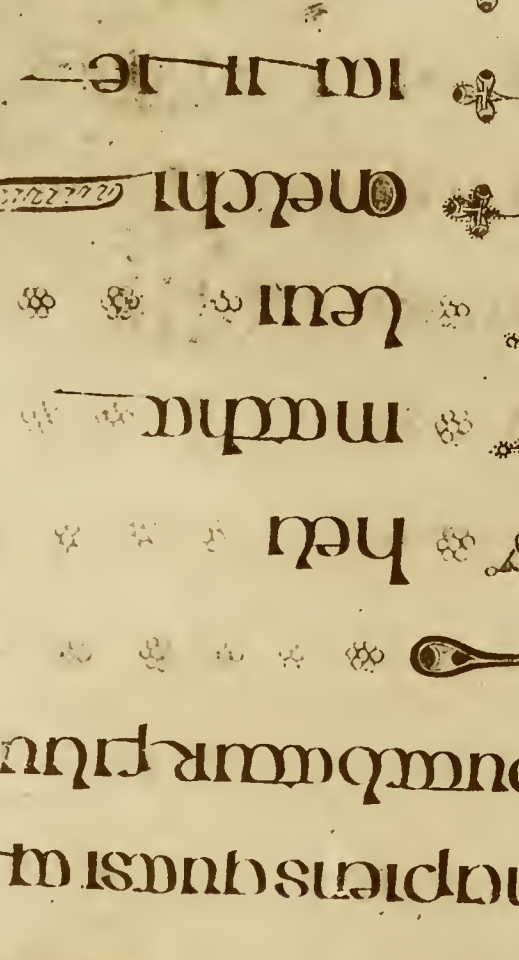
QUI fuit heli
QUI fuit matha
QUI fuit levi
etc. etc. etc.

This page contains the most elaborate set of interlaced initials in the Book, the letter Q being repeated twelve times in superb tints of alternate green, blue, scarlet, and yellow. The 'Et' before 'ipse' is a gem of minute workmanship.

Notice the figure of an ancient warrior, armed with the small round shield and a long spear.

puuosc uos plus inus dlcaus me-

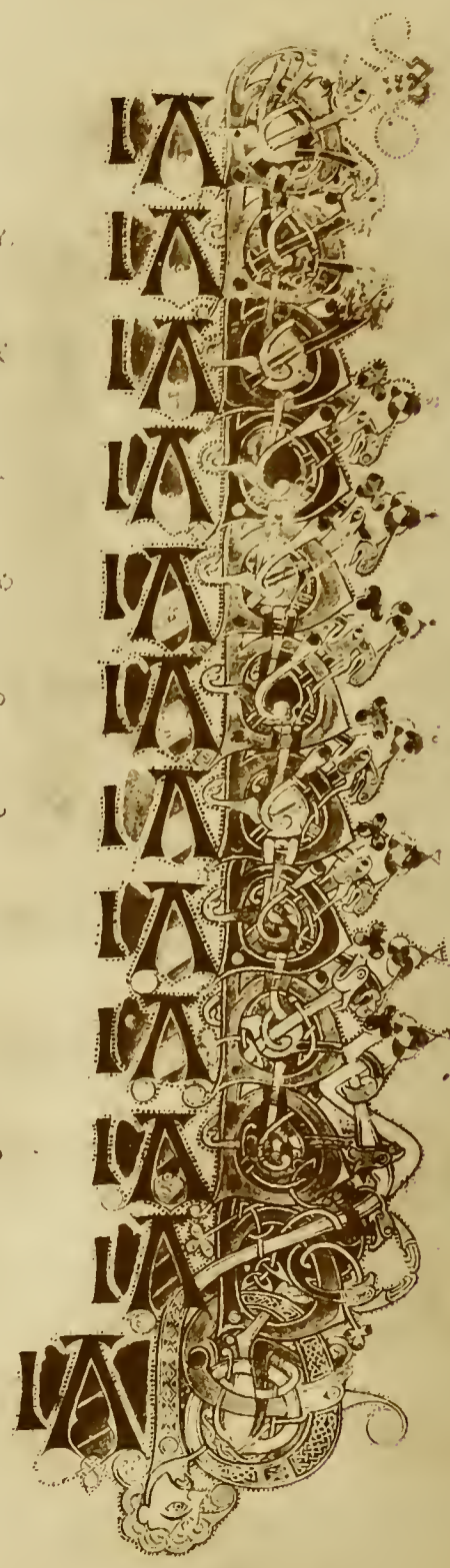
bcic coupdcuic mihi ✠



lpse hsouc mapiens quasi u-

norum ormnium. uquudouur plus

iosqh



pnc hcu

pnc mcdnc

pnc leui

pnc mcchi

pnc ia ii ie

pnc iosqh

pnc inhac hic

pnc anos

pnc hunc

pnc esu

pnc huzzc

pnc aiaui

PLATE XXII.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL.

QUI FUIT.

THIS IS AN ENLARGEMENT of a portion of the first page of the Genealogy in St. Luke's Gospel (see preceding plate). Magnified nearly four times.

Observe the man's head and the elongation of his neck until it is joined with his legs and feet, which appear at the left-hand side of the third and fourth Q; also the fine line of the spiral occupying the circle in margin beside the first Q, and that resting on the top of the right-hand stroke of the U.

It is noteworthy that, although the opening page of St. Matthew is so richly ornamented, the decorations on the leaves containing the Genealogy have not been finished. Some of the outlines of the border and its zoomorphic terminals are drawn, and a ground of yellow has been laid on some parts of the design.

PLATE XXIII.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER XV, VERSES 9–12.

THIS plate reproduces examples of the smaller ornamental initials which are found on every page in the ordinary text of the Book. This reproduction from St. Luke's Gospel gives two :—

ITA dico . . . . .

AIT autem . . . . .

Their linear dimensions are the same as in the original text.

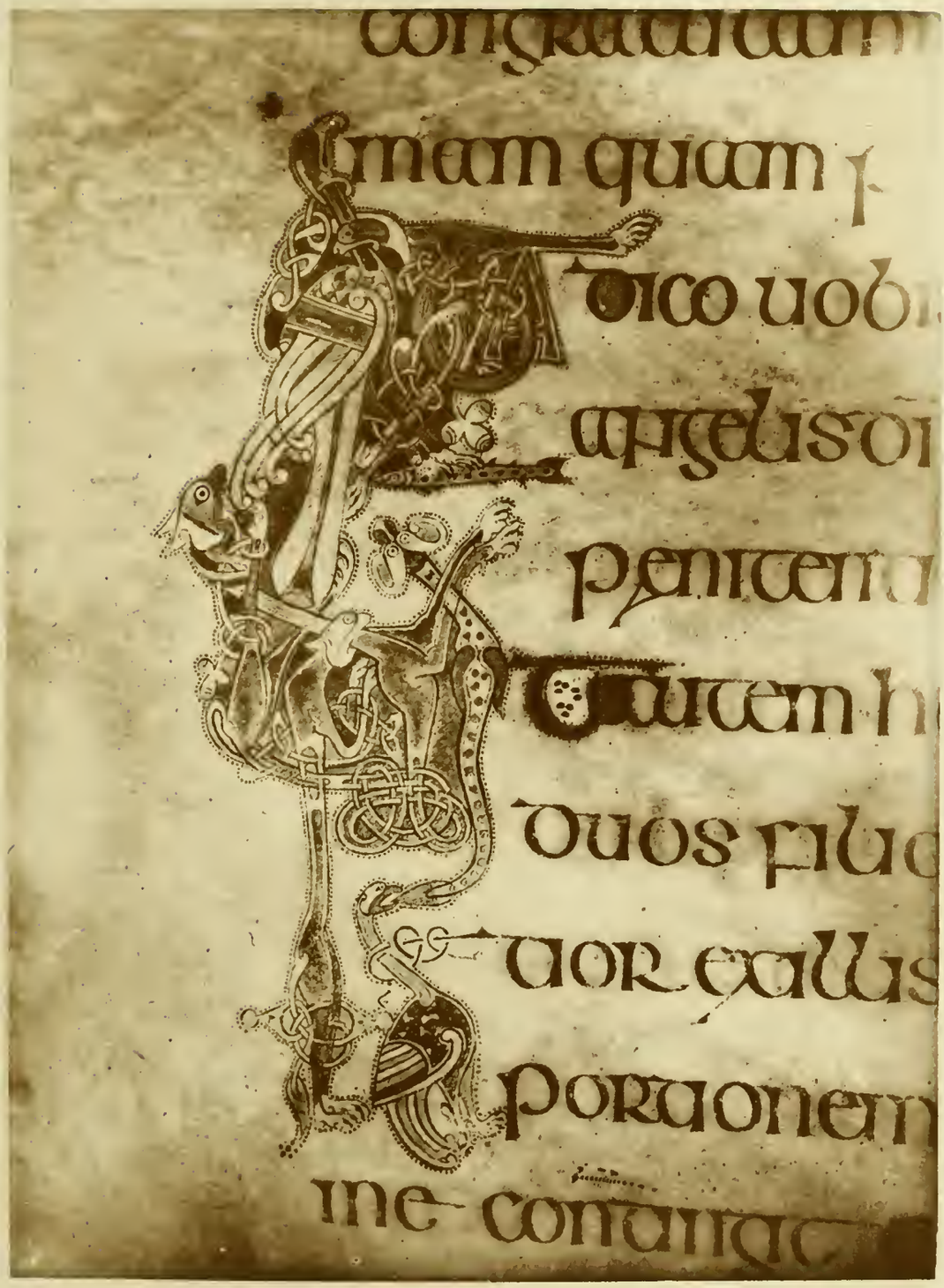


PLATE XXIV.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER XXII, VERSE 3.

INtra

ET Abiit

THIS plate shows two of the ordinary initials in St. Luke's Gospel. The IN is a beautiful specimen, and displays in the centre of the coloured background one of the numerous inlay patterns so frequently to be met with in the decoration of these smaller initials in the Book of Kells.

An enlargement of these two initials will be found on the next plate.

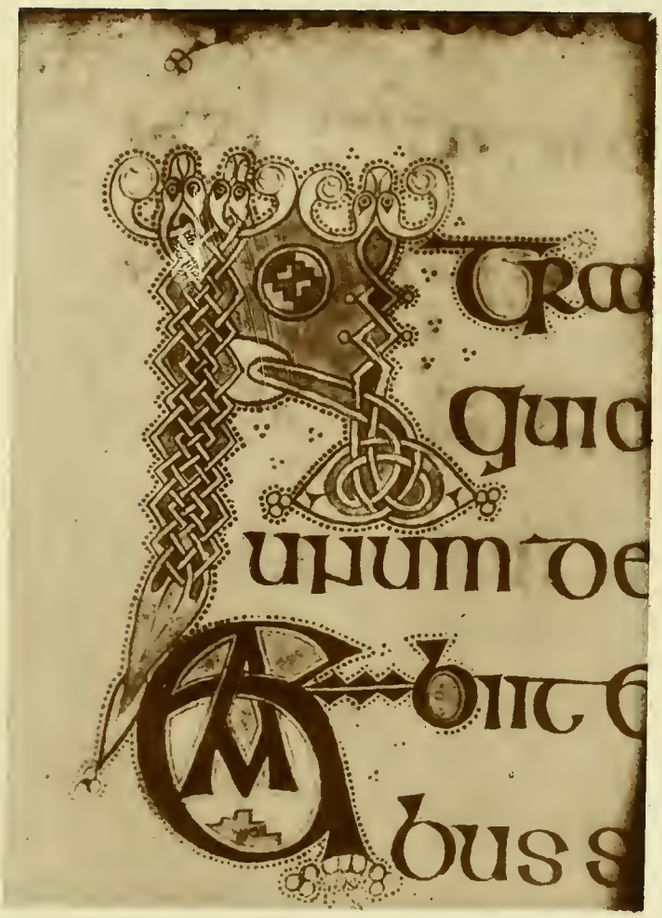


PLATE XXV.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER XXII, VERSE 3, AND CHAPTER XIX, VERSE 12.

Intra	Dixit
ET Abiit	Vocatis

THESE specimens of some of the smaller initials from St. Luke's Gospel are enlarged to twice the linear dimensions of the original.

The initials IN and ET are reproduced exactly the size of the original on the preceding plate.

quomodo cu

u

Trau

quia

upum de

bitc

buss

confessam re

ihrū

sibi regnum

causa

PLATE XXVI.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER XVII, VERSES 4, 5, 6.

AD tendite . . . . .

ETSI septies . . . . .

ET dixerunt . . . . .

THE specimens of the ordinary Initial letters from St. Luke's Gospel have been enlarged to double the linear dimensions of the original text.

The accuracy and steadiness of the drawing, though subjected to this severe test, is most remarkable.

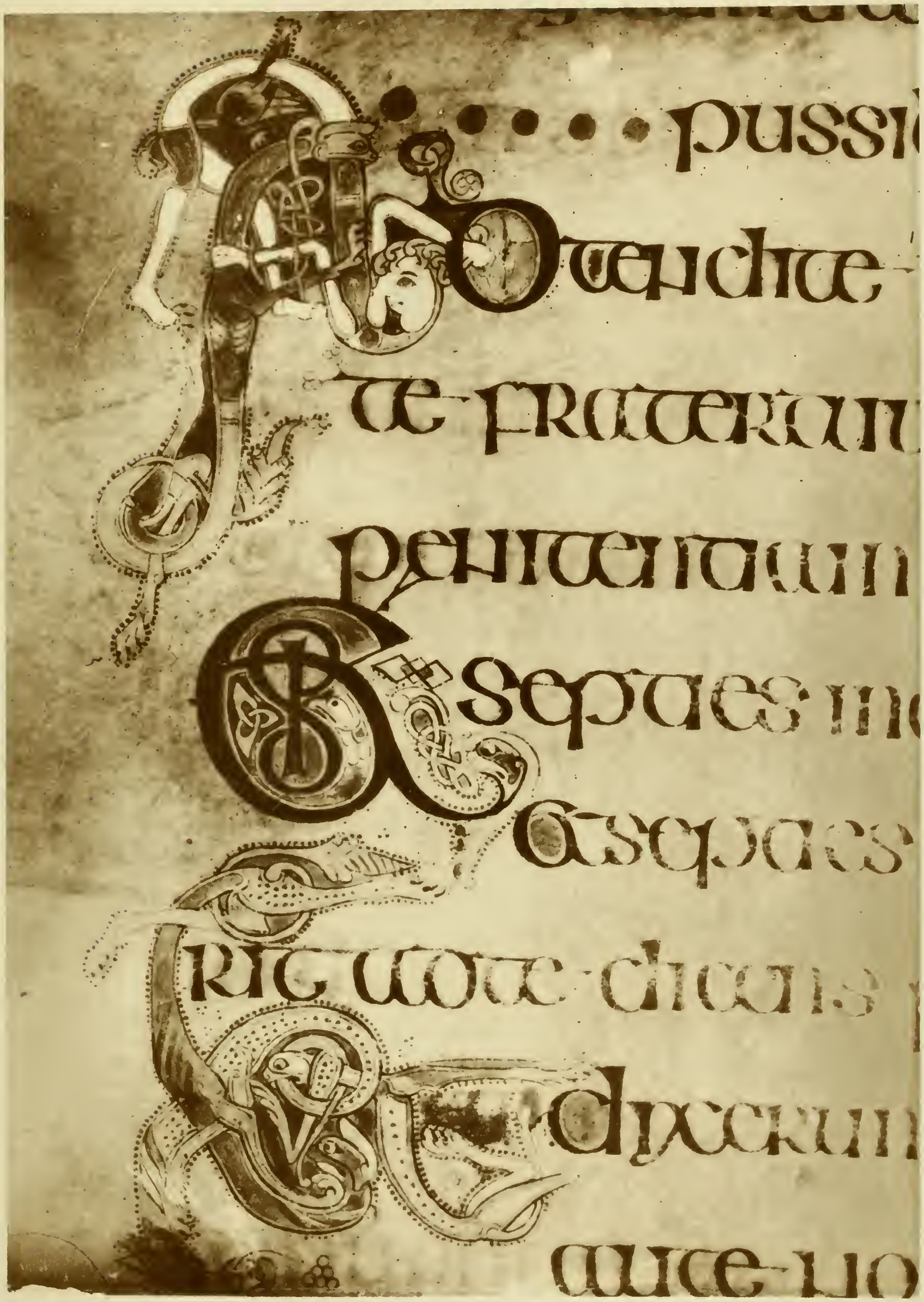


PLATE XXVII.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. MARK'S GOSPEL.

ET ERAT[IO
HANNIS BAPTIZAN[S IHM]

THIS large initial ET is from the Prologue of St. Mark's Gospel, and has been enlarged to almost double the linear dimensions of the original. Notwithstanding the numerous instances of the combination of these two letters in the Book of Kells, there are not two to be found with the same ornamentation. In this respect alone the variety of ornamental designs contained in the Book is a revelation of the wonderful versatility and inventive genius of the illuminator.

Notice the beauty of the interlaced ornaments, and the characteristic method of connecting the spirals. The spiral lines in the small circles have suffered from rubbing, and are so fine that in the Manuscript itself it is necessary to use a lens in order to see them distinctly; hence they are not visible in the reproduction.

PLATE XXVIII.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. MARK'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER XV, VERSE 25.

ERAT
AUTEM
HORA TER(CIA)
et Crucifigentes
eum
divise

THE interlacing in the sections of the letter E and the dog's head are worthy of examination. The lozenge-shaped devices in the middle of the upright borders contain one of the many patterns used in Celtic enamel work. Observe the head and shoulders of the human figure placed at the top of the right-hand corner, while the end of the vesture worn by the same figure appears in the left-hand corner at the bottom. In the line 'HORA TERCIA' the letters CIA have been added by a later hand. The word *divise* should read *diviserunt*.

PLATE XXIX.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

A PAGE FROM THE SUMMARIES OF THE GOSPELS.

NATIUITAS
XPI IN BETHLEM IU
DEAE MAGI
MUNERA OFFERUNT ET
INFANTES INTER
FICIUNTUR × REGRESSIO

THESE words, in the handwriting of Gerald Plunket, appear again at the bottom of the leaf.

This folio is full of interlaced and fretted ornament, in which the ground is coloured, while the design is effectively thrown up in the natural colour of the vellum.

Parts of this design are much rubbed, and a few of the colours are faded. An irregular contraction which has taken place in the vellum has given some of the lines and ornament a crooked and twisted appearance. The human form is introduced three times into this elaborate design: observe the head and arms of one of these at the top, while the legs appear in the left-hand corner at the bottom.

As has already been noticed in the Introduction, the vine and trefoil are the roots of the leaf-ornament in the various foliated designs which are found in Celtic art. Possibly the star-like pattern which occurs frequently in Celtic illumination may be a flower conventionally treated: observe this latter design repeated six times in the embellishment of the letter N in 'Nativitas,' where it is effectively thrown up in the natural colour of the vellum; notice also the conventional treatment of the vine under 'FICIUNTUR REGRESSIO.' With regard to the colouring of the original, it is worth calling attention to the good effect produced by the bright green which forms the background of the FA and the S of 'INFANTES,' and the E of 'INTER.'

PLATE XXX.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER I, VERSE I.

LIBER
GENE
RATI
ONIS

THE first page of St. Matthew's Gospel, containing the two opening words of the Gospel—Liber generationis—treated with great elaboration. This page is full of minute and interesting ornamental forms. The treatment of the spiral ornament round the outer curve of the letter L should be specially noticed, as also the topmost portion of the same letter, containing four circles filled with a maze of intertwined reptiles and birds.

This latter can be better appreciated by looking at the enlargement given on the next plate, which furnishes a splendid proof of the skill and of the extraordinary firmness of hand possessed by the artist.

Notice the treatment of the letter B. The forms of birds, with their necks elongated and minutely interlaced, are effectively divided into sections of ornament by small rectangles filled in with mosaic design.

The ornament enclosed in the circle on the side of the letter I, below the book held by the figure in the margin, is an example of one of the more elaborate mosaic patterns derived from the Cloisonné inlay, used with such rich effect upon vessels made of gold.

The scheme and harmony of colour in this page are beautiful: a striking effect in the illumination is produced by the letters GENE and ONIS being executed in red on a rich purple ground, and the letters RATI in purple on a red ground.

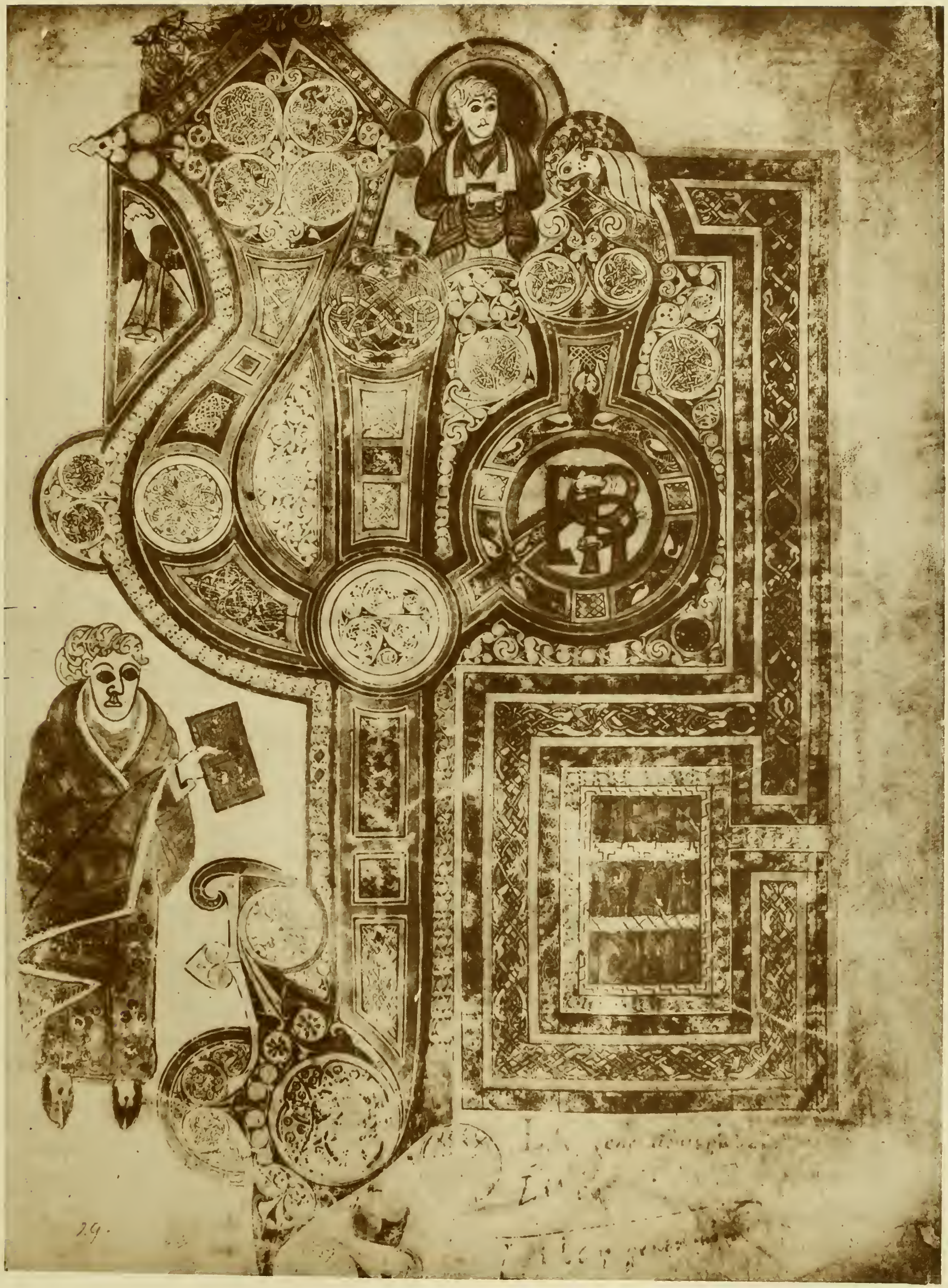


PLATE XXXI.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

THIS IS AN ENLARGEMENT of the topmost portion of the letter L on the first page of St. Matthew's Gospel—Liber generationis. See preceding plate. The graceful treatment of the spiral and continuous trumpet-ornament, carried along the outside edge of the letter L, as well as the interlaced work in the four circles, is worthy of careful examination. Two contain the forms of six birds intertwined; while each of the other two is filled with skilfully designed patterns produced by the interlacing of six serpents. The design in the lower circle on the right forms a shamrock-shaped ornament of much grace.

PLATE XXXII.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. MARK'S GOSPEL.

Chapter I, Verse I.

INITIUM EVANGELII IHU XPI.

THE first page of St. Mark's Gospel, containing the four opening words of the Gospel—Initium Evangelii Iesu Christi. IHU = IESU (Genitive); XPI = Christi. The Latin Manuscripts of the Gospels retained the Greek contraction IHS = IES (H being the Greek E) for IESUS. The name Iesus was sometimes written Ihesus, so that Ihs and Ihu might pass with the reader as Latin contractions. The Latin MSS. also retained the Greek contraction of Christus—XPS or χρς (P being the Greek R); but in the more elaborate illuminations and pictorial pages in the Books of Kells, Lindisfarne, and Durrow, B is apparently written for P, *e.g.* the opening words of St. John's Gospel ('IN PRINCIBIO' for 'IN PRINCIPIO') in the three Manuscripts. See Plates III, IX, and XXXVI.

However, on a closer examination, it becomes evident that the letter is not B (as has been assumed by some authorities), but P, with an ornamental terminal added to fill the space below; moreover, the letter B has a distinct character of its own, differing from this variant of the letter P.

The whole of the illuminative ornament on this page should be examined with a lens. It contains a number of the typical patterns of the Celtic school superbly executed. The following features in the design specially call for notice:—the beautiful effect produced by the interlaced snakes at the four corners of the letter N. The three circles above the letters EUAN contain a most peculiar device: three human figures are intertwined, the right arms of each, interlaced with the left legs, meet in the centre, with each of the three hands clasping a wrist. The small circular ornaments below the letters EUAN are filled with the heads of birds: the other circles above and below are filled with a curious heart-shaped design formed of spirals. The grotesque human figure at the top is held in the grasp of a dragon; under the cross of the T are the wings of two dragons.

PLATE XXXIII.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. MARK'S GOSPEL.

INITIUM EVANGELII.

AN ENLARGEMENT of the central portion of the first page of St. Mark's Gospel—Initium Evangelii. The design enlarged is the interlacing of the snakes at the right side of the letters EUAN. The enlargement is three times the linear dimensions of the original, and shows the marvellous accuracy of the drawing.

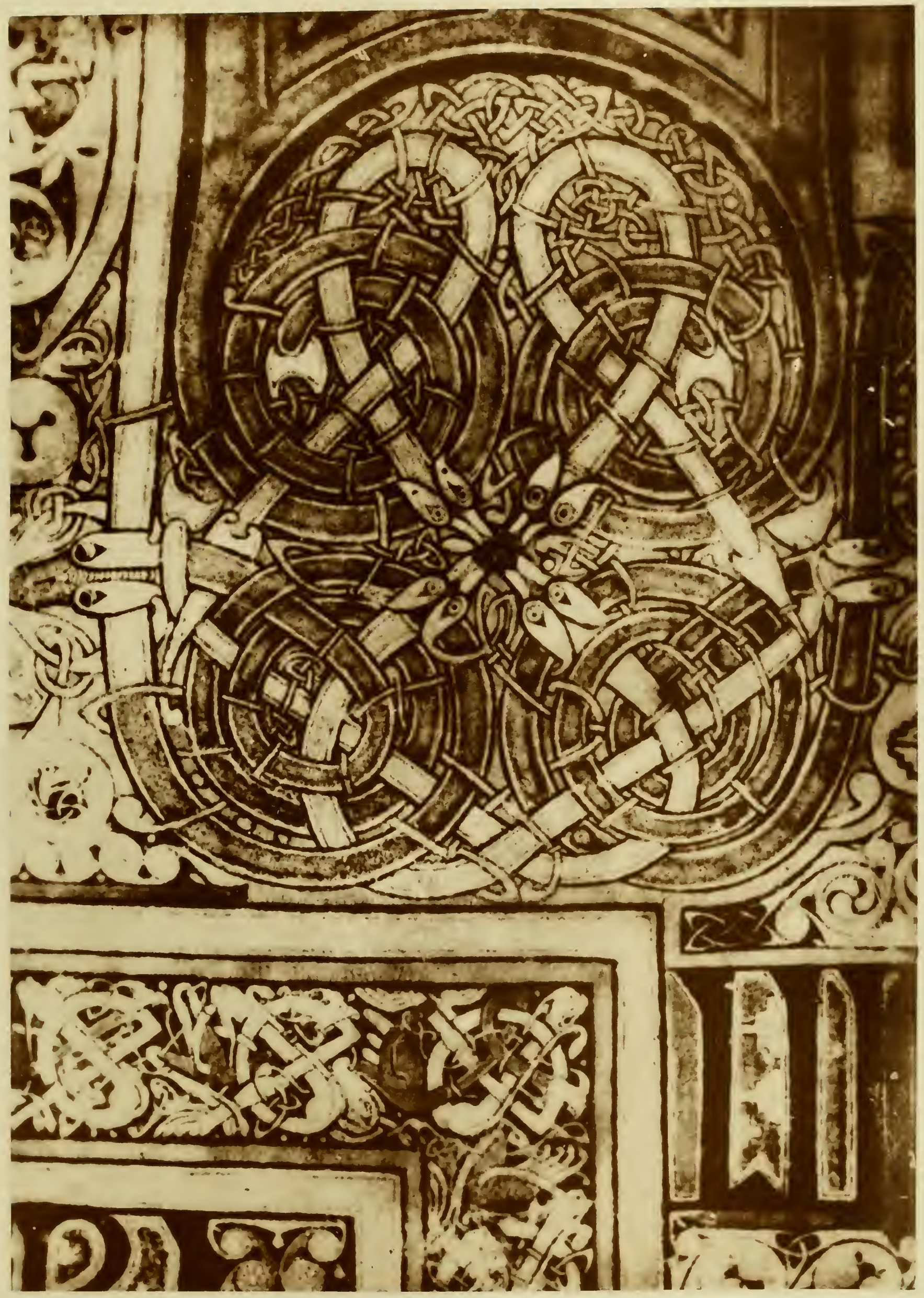


PLATE XXXIV.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER I, VERSE I.

QUON
IAM

THE first page of the Gospel of St. Luke is devoted to the first word in the Latin text of that Gospel—Quoniam. The ornament is elaborate, and contains some excellent examples of the 'trumpet pattern' in the segments of the circles attached to the sides of the rectangle of the Q, as well as in the graceful spiral-work so ingeniously connected, and which forms the border of the four sides of the rectangular design. The six circles placed at the four corners and at the middle points of the sides of the rectangle, as seen in the adjoining plate, are apparently almost devoid of ornament. This is due to the red pigment in the original having suffered (as in some other folios) from rubbing; but a few traces of the ornamental devices enclosed in these circles can still be deciphered even in the collotype reproduction.

Under the letters NIAM will be noticed a number of human figures, probably introduced with reference to the words which follow ('multi conati sunt ordinare narrationem')—the 'many' who had 'taken in hand to set forth' in writing 'those things' recorded in the Gospel history. The circle forming the bottom of the letter Q is filled with a profusion of reptile forms, snakes, and birds, marvellously intertwined, and, in the Celtic fashion, made to submit to every conceivable form of contortion. The intricacies of the intertwining may be better appreciated by examining the enlargement given in the next plate (xxxv). At the bottom of the page, to the right of the circle, notice the projection of the legs and tail of a monstrous form, whose head appears at the top of the page. The finial, composed of spiral and trumpet patterns, which surmounts the page, has been mutilated by the binder, and deprives the whole design of an important adjunct to its beauty.

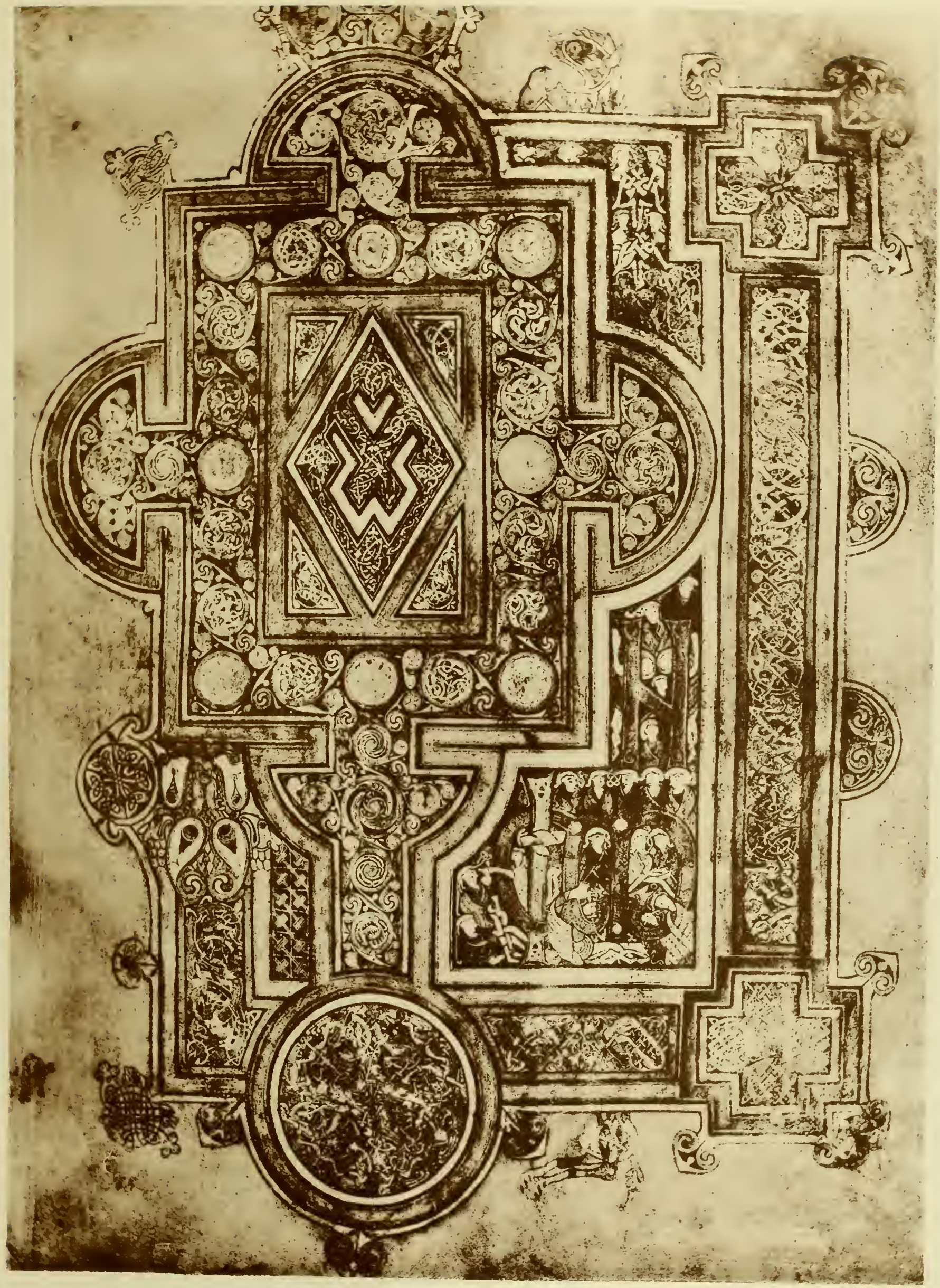


PLATE XXXV.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL.

QUONIAM.

THIS IS AN ENLARGEMENT of the circle forming the bottom of the letter Q. It enables one to better appreciate the wonderful ingenuity of the artist who could combine so many distinct forms and weave them into one balanced design. Observe how the whole design divides the circle into quadrants, the design of the four quadrants being of a similar character.

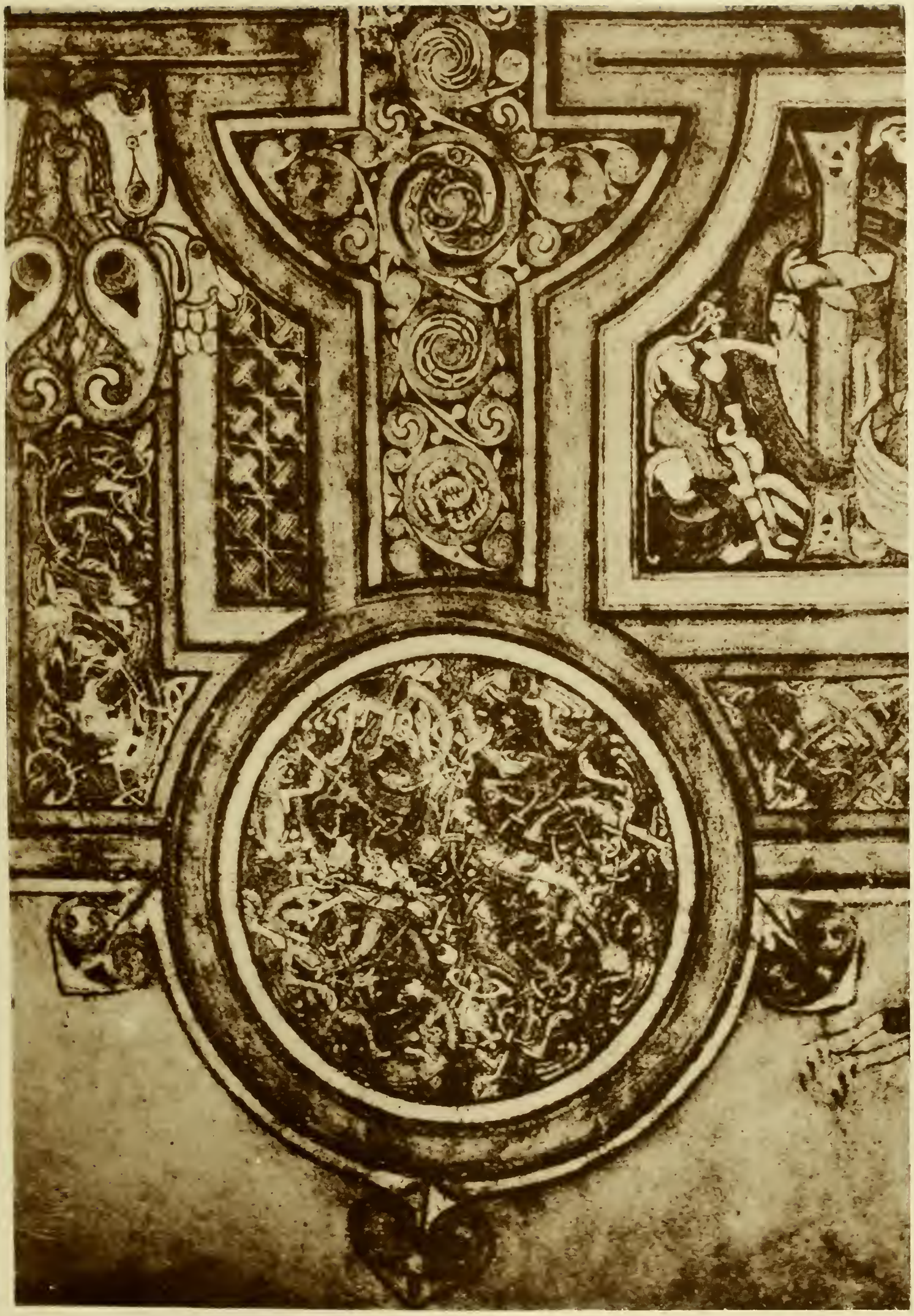


PLATE XXXVI.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER I, VERSE I.

IN P
RINCI
PIO ERAT VER
BUM

THE first page of the Gospel of St. John, containing the words—'In Principio [see note on Plate XXXII] erat verbum' —a page which is always richly ornamented in manuscripts of the Celtic school. Here the ornaments of the letters IN P, and also (though on a less magnificent scale) RINC, are most elaborate: the scheme and harmony of the colouring in the original are of great richness, and evidently executed by the same skilful hand that produced the Monogram page. See Plate XL.

The four circles in the ornaments at both ends of the design forming the letters IN ought to be specially examined. The spiral and trumpet patterns terminate in three discs, which afford good examples of some of the various designs in frequent use by the Celtic artist when applying the decorative enamel inlay to some cumdach or other product of the metal-worker's art.

The human figure at the top of the page, posing on the middle of the letter N, holds a book in the left hand, the hand being concealed in the folds of the robe. The smaller figure of a man surmounting the letter P is depicted in a sitting posture opposite the monstrous form of a dragon, with open mouth and tongue protruding. The right hand of the man holds a V-shaped vessel, which he is in the act of raising to his lips.

Noteworthy among the many features of interest presented by the illuminative treatment of this page is the graceful drawing of the letters RINC, which are formed by serpents ingeniously bound together by the interweaving of smaller reptile forms. Close to the letter C, and intertwined with it, observe the figure of a man forming the letter I. The lyre-like shape of the letter C, and the extended arms of the human figure, present the appearance of a man in the attitude of playing on a musical instrument, and bear some likeness to those representations of musicians found in Egyptian art.

PLATE XXXVII.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

IN PRINCIPIO

THIS IS AN ENLARGEMENT of a portion of the ornament in the letter N in the preceding plate (xxxvi). The interlacing with the small enamel patterns contained in the central device has a distinct resemblance to the combination of interlaced wire and enamels found in the metal work.

Notice the minuteness and beauty of the interlaced patterns in the two spandrel-shaped devices contained in the segment of the circle at the top. In this enlargement the ornament appears horizontally.

The ornament in this plate has been enlarged to nearly twice the linear dimensions of the original.

PLATE XXXVIII.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER XXVI, VERSE 31.

THIS IS AN ENLARGEMENT of a small portion of the framework which encloses the words:—

*"TUNC DICIT ILLIS IH̄S OMNES VOS SCAN[dalum]."

The letters appearing are the OM in the word OMNES. The chief feature of interest to be noticed in this plate is the interlaced and fretted patterns so skilfully traced upon a lampblack background, and thrown up in the natural colour of vellum. In the original these minute designs produce a charming effect. In this plate they are enlarged to two and a half times their original linear dimensions.

* A reproduction of the full page will be found in Dr. Abbott's "Celtic Ornaments from the Book of Kells," Plate XIII.

PLATE XXXIX.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

THIS IS AN ENLARGEMENT of one of the central portions of minute ornament in the *eight-circled cross. The enlargement is slightly over four times the linear dimensions of the original. The wealth of fine spiral and interlaced ornament on this page surpasses description, and ranks next to the Christi page in its exquisite workmanship. It has suffered much from rubbing; and many of the delicately drawn lines are scarcely visible. In addition to the eight circles filled up with spiral and trumpet designs, producing a lace-like effect, there are five other spaces containing similar ornament, treated with an amazing wealth of variety. It is evident that this page was executed by the master-hand of the same artist who wrought the marvellous ornaments of the Monogram page. There is a close resemblance in the elaboration of the trumpet and other patterns in the circles; and the treatment of the human form and that of the bird manifests the same feeling as that evinced in the ornament at the intersection of the letter X. (See Plates XLIV and XLV.)

Observe at the bottom the finely drawn spiral, containing within it three bladder-like bodies. The same device fills a number of the small circles in the next Plate (XL). It consists of three, sometimes only two, of these curious forms with long necks and tails. The explanation of this pattern is to be found on the stamped leather satchel of the Book of Armagh, on which there is a large circular design enclosing three quadrupeds. This pattern has evidently resulted from diminishing the larger device to a mere conventional outline.

*A reproduction of the full page will be found in Dr. Abbott's "Celtic Ornaments from the Book of Kells," Plate XVI.

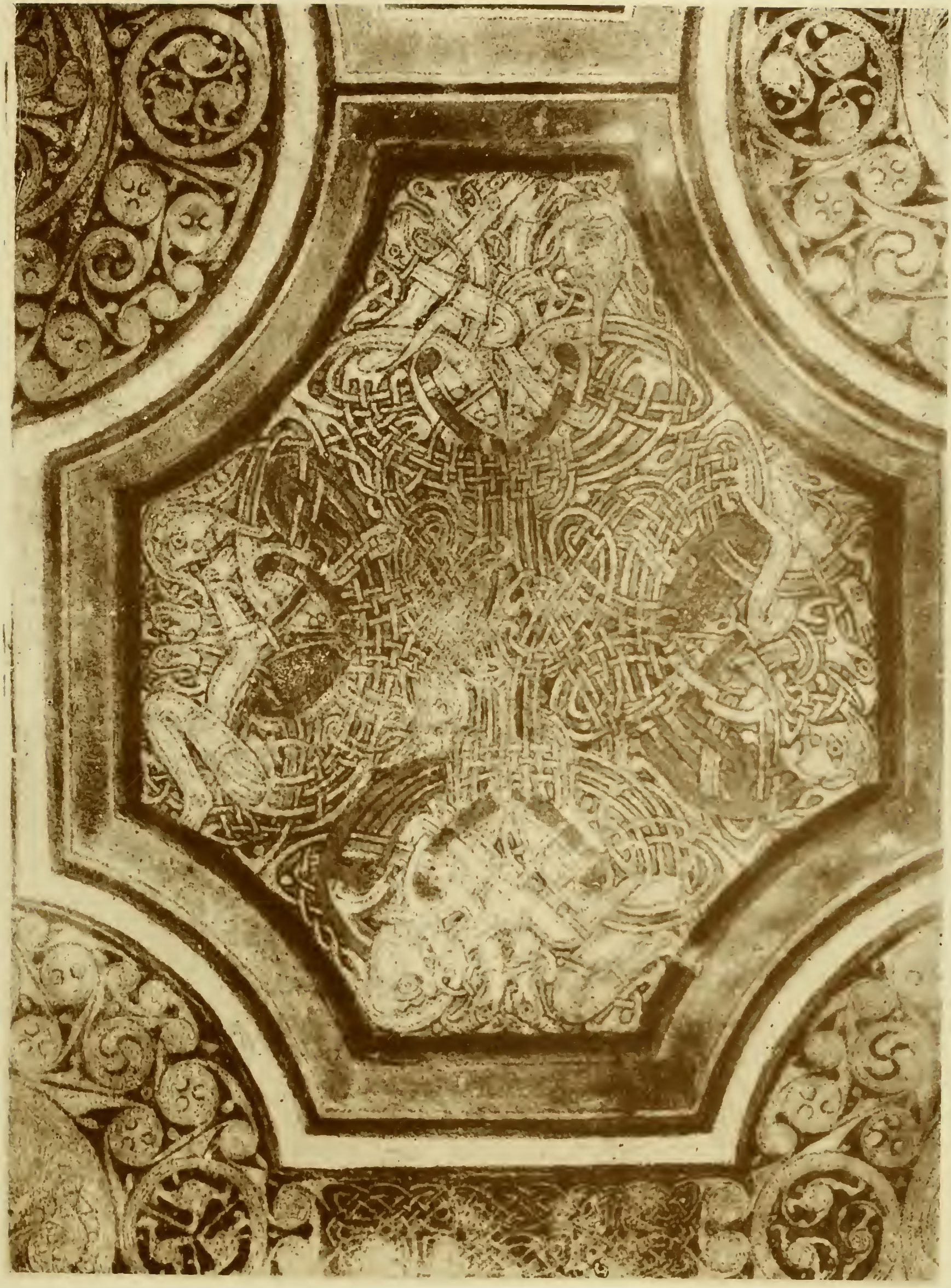


PLATE XL.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER I, VERSE 18.

XPI

ħ Generatio.

THE first page of the Narrative portion of St. Matthew's Gospel is called the 'Monogram' page. It contains the words 'XPI ħ [= autem] Generatio.' The Greek letters XPI stand for the name Christi, and were used in the Latin text of the Gospels by Celtic scribes.

In the reign of Constantine, after his conversion to Christianity, this Monogram of our Lord—☧—was placed upon the Roman Labarum, as well as on many of the Roman coins; it is one of the earliest Christian symbols, of which numerous examples are to be seen on the walls of the Catacombs.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the beauty and the elaborate ornamentation of this page, and the delicate skill with which the intricate illuminations have been executed. Every variety of design to be found in Celtic art has been lavished by the illuminating artist upon this Monogram, which is the crowning splendour of this Gospel Book; "so that," as Miss Margaret Stokes has expressed it, "the name which is the epitome of his faith is also the epitome of his country's art."

The mind is filled with amazement as one views the extraordinary combination of extravagant human and reptile forms, intricate arabesque traceries, and geometrical designs, all woven together in a maze of almost incredible interlacings, which fascinate and charm the eye. Serpents and other reptile forms, but to what species they

belong it would be difficult to conjecture; birds with their necks and legs elongated and interlaced; human figures with arms and legs twisted and knotted in coils, while their bodies are intertwined with those of birds—all yielding to the capricious requirements of the designer—are made to do duty as parts of this marvellous composition of ornament.

Along the ascending line of the letter X are three angels with outspread wings; two of these are holding books in their hands, while the third holds in each hand a sceptre terminating in a trefoil. In Celtic art these blossoming or flower sceptres are sometimes found in the hands of Christ and His angels.

In the centre of the letter P, with its graceful and crozier-like outline, is placed the head of a man; at the top, over the intersection of the letter X, emerges from four centres of trumpet ornament the veiled head of a woman.

Between the bottom of the letter P and the ascending line of the letter X there is a curious group of animals. Two rats are depicted in the act of seizing the Eucharistic bread, while two cats are watching them. Possibly in this design there was, in the fancy of the artist, an allusion to the unworthy receivers, and the impending judgment which awaited such profanation.

Observe the bladder-shaped patterns (referred to in the note on Plate xxxix) filling the small circles. They are more clearly defined on Plate xli.

The warped appearance of the border in Plate xlii, and the slight distortion of the circles in Plates xli and xliii, are due to the extreme difficulty of securing the page in position for photography.

Plate xl was photographed when the ms. was unbound some years ago; hence it was possible to secure a more level surface.

The linear dimensions are rather less than those of the original, the actual size of which is $12\frac{7}{8} \times 9\frac{5}{8}$ inches. Probably the leaves measured 15×12 inches before they were reduced by the binder, who in the process of reduction grievously mutilated many of the ornaments.

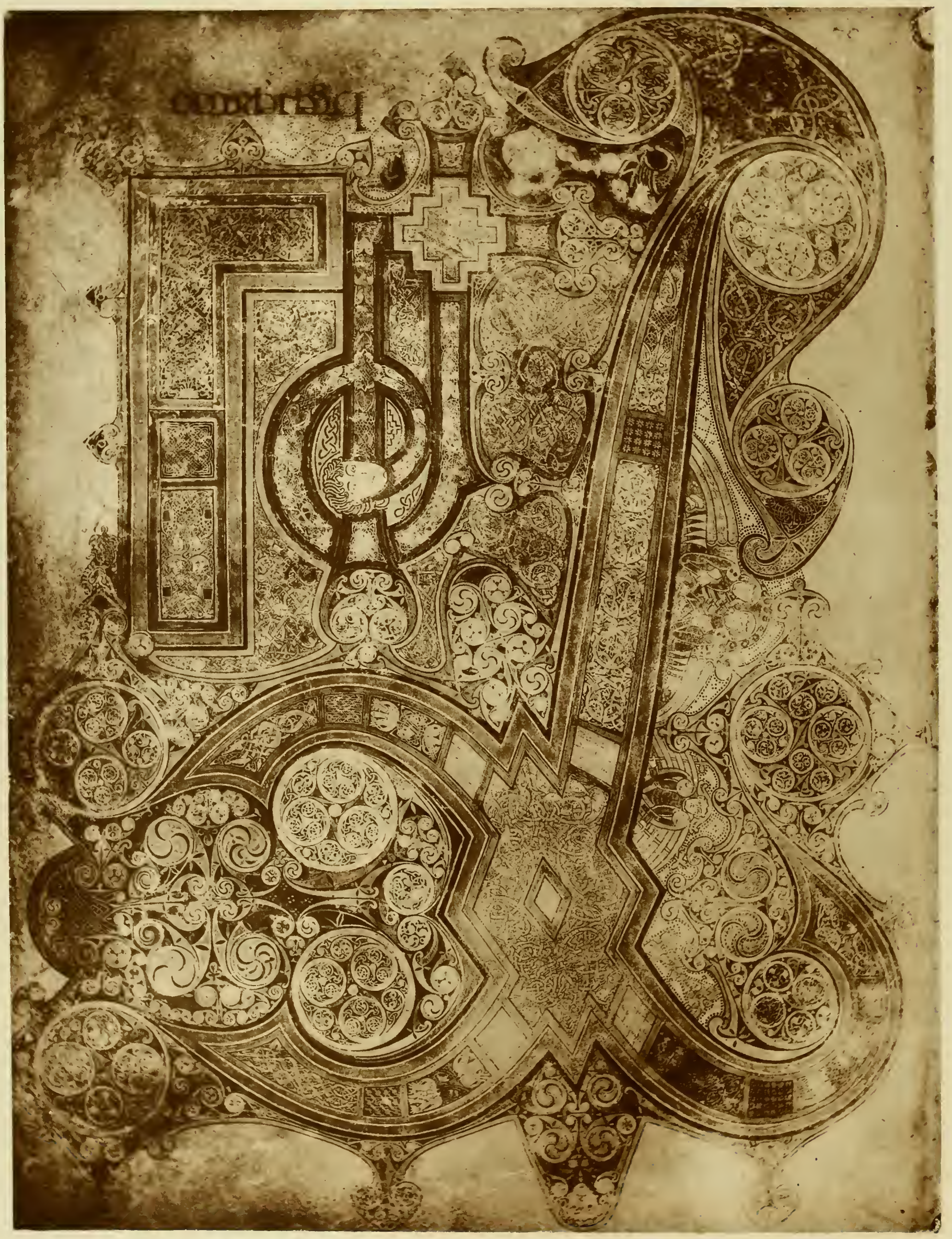


PLATE XLI.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

MONOGRAM PAGE.

THIS IS AN ENLARGEMENT of the upward stroke of the letter X. It is filled with a maze of interlaced work and numerous spiral and trumpet devices.

Notice the two angels holding books.

PLATE XLII.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

MONOGRAM PAGE.

THIS IS AN ENLARGEMENT of the lower portion of the Christi page containing the letters PI. Every part will repay a careful examination. At the bottom of the letter P, and also in the square in the border to the right of the same letter, the fine interlacings traced in vellum on a background of colour are splendid specimens of accurate drawing and minute workmanship. Notice, above the letter ħ, the animal resembling a rat in the act of seizing a fish.

Ingemmo

PLATE XLIII.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

MONOGRAM PAGE.

THIS IS AN ENLARGEMENT of the outer portion of the letter X. Rubbing has removed some of the colouring of the delicately lined ornaments.

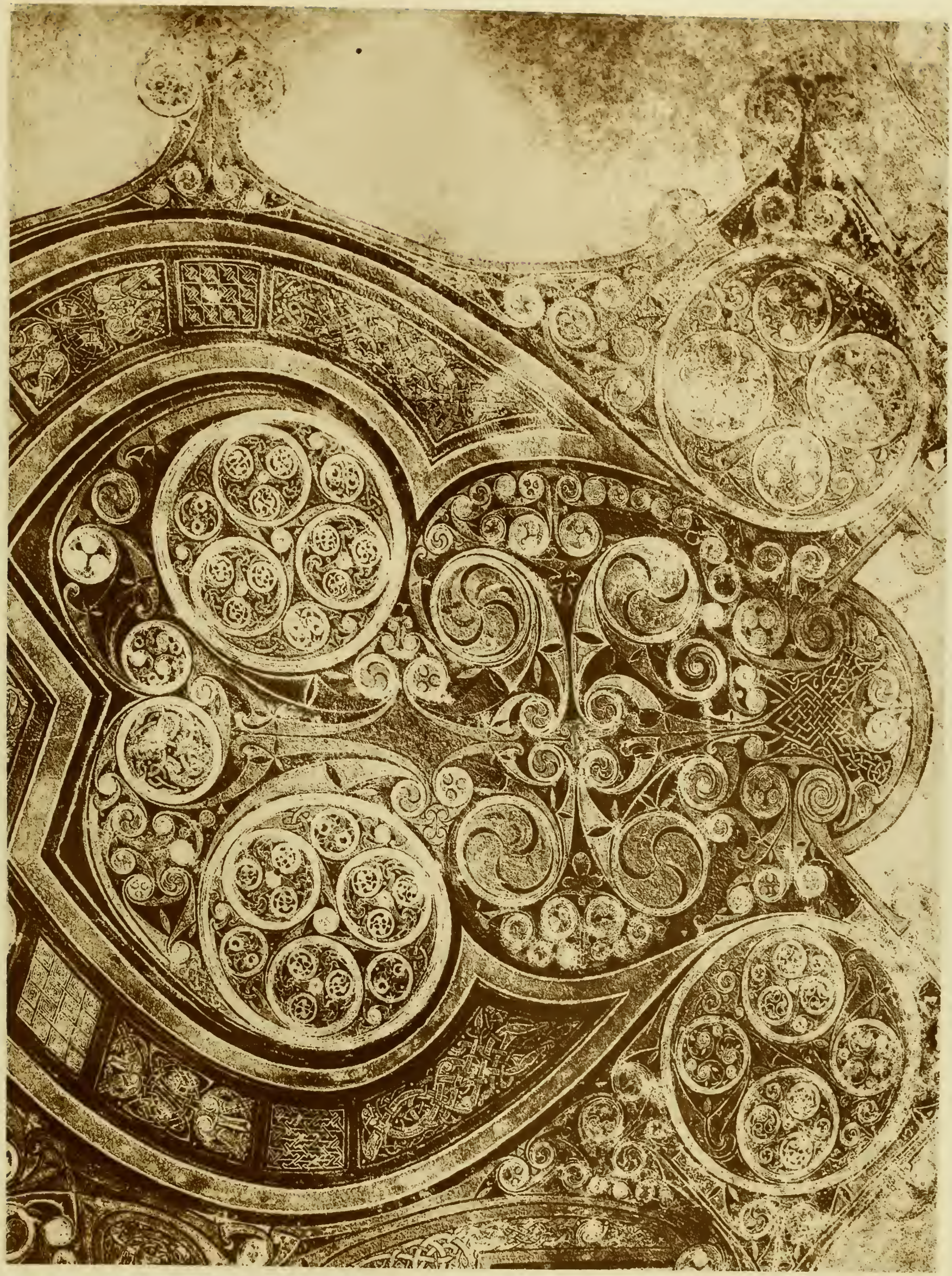


PLATE XLIV.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

MONOGRAM PAGE.

THIS IS AN ENLARGEMENT of the intersection of the letter X, the ornament of which is worthy of careful examination. Although it is enlarged to almost twice the linear dimensions of the original, the drawing loses nothing of its sharpness. Observe the forms of men and birds with a profusion of intricate interweaving.

The veiled head of the woman at the top, as well as the angel with the budding sceptres, have already been alluded to in the note on Plate XL.

Observe in the space next to the angel, on the outside of the upper curve of the X, a moth with outspread wings.

PLATE XLV.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

MONOGRAM PAGE.

THIS IS A FURTHER ENLARGEMENT of the ornament at the intersection of the X on the preceding plate. This ornament is enlarged to about four times the linear dimensions of the original. Notwithstanding this severe test, the accuracy and grace of the drawing remain unimpaired, as an evidence of the devotion and conscientious work of the Celtic scribes of the Columban school.

PLATE XLVI.

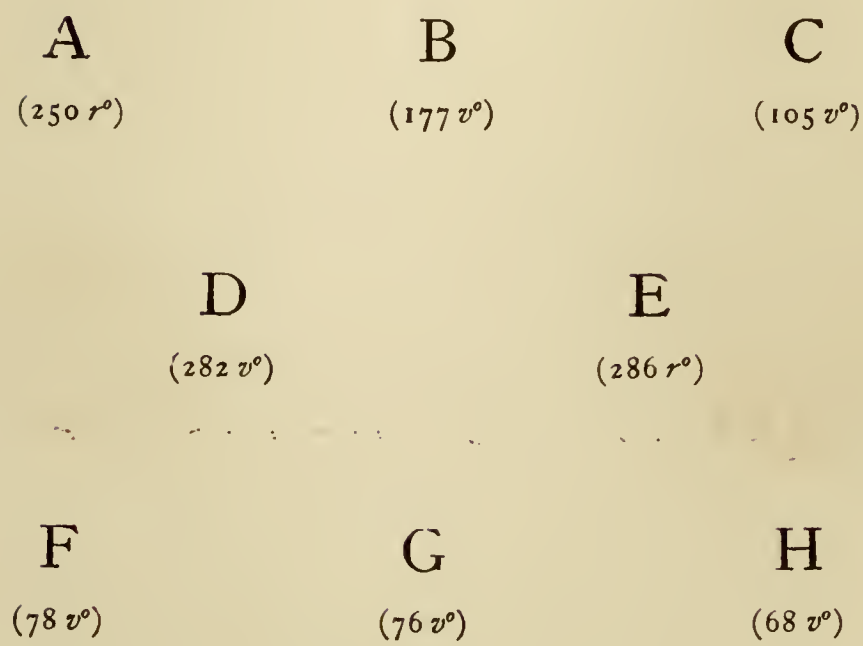
Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

SMALLER ORNAMENTAL INITIALS.



The numbers under the letters indicate the leaves which contain the originals.

PLATE XLVII.

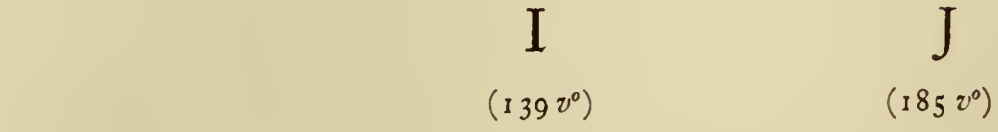
Celtic Ornaments

FROM

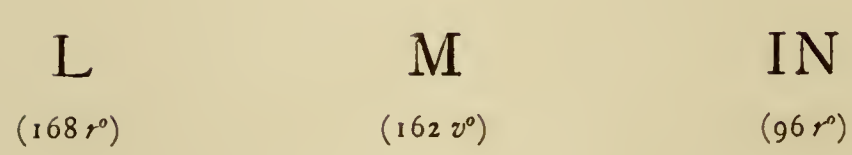
BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

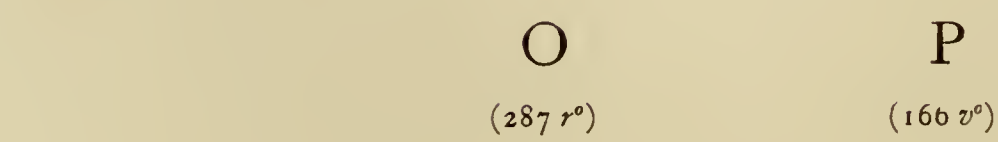
SMALLER ORNAMENTAL INITIALS.



I (139 *v°*) J (185 *v°*)



L (168 *r°*) M (162 *v°*) IN (96 *r°*)



O (287 *r°*) P (166 *v°*)

The numbers under the letters indicate the leaves which contain the originals.

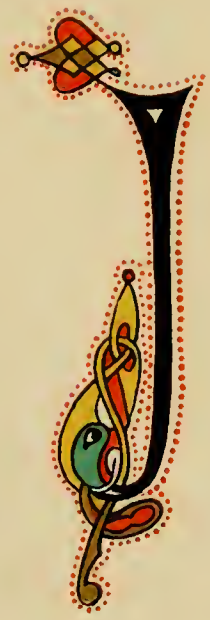


PLATE XLVIII.

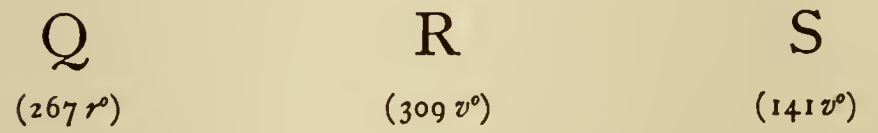
Celtic Ornaments

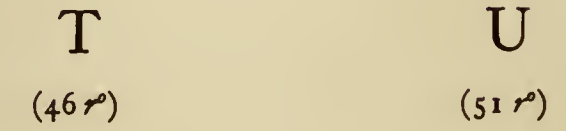
FROM

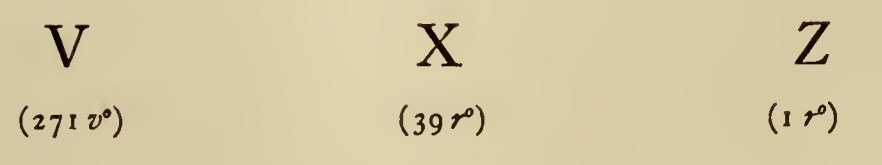
BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

SMALLER ORNAMENTAL INITIALS.







The numbers under the letters indicate the leaves which contain the originals.

PLATE XLIX.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

SMALLER ORNAMENTAL INITIALS.

DI (247 r°)

ETu (164 r°)

FA (261 r°)

HI (246 v°)

The numbers under the letters indicate the leaves which contain the originals.

PLATE L.

Celtic Ornaments

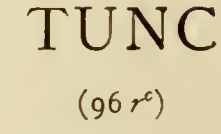
FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

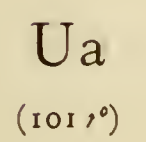
SMALLER ORNAMENTAL LETTERS CONJOINED.

QUI (260 v^{o})

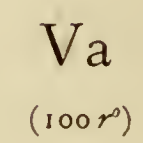


TUNC (96 r^{o})

Ua (101 r^{o})



Va (100 r^{o})



The numbers under the letters indicate the leaves which contain the originals.

PLATE LI.

Celtic Ornaments

FROM

BOOK OF KELLS.

Book of Kells.

SMALLER ORNAMENTAL LETTERS CONJOINED.

IN
(257 *v°*)

MA
(185 *v°*)

MEMo
QUI
(257 *v°*)

NA
(164 *r°*)

The numbers under the letters indicate the leaves which contain the originals.