

## SESQUIUOLUS

We read in Ducange : — *Sesquiolus*, animal quadrupes, in lib. de Mirab. S. S. apud s. Aug., in App. t. III, p. 7. And again we read in Migne (Lex. Man. ad scr. med. et inf. Lat., 1858) : — *Sesquivolus*, animal quadrupes : animal inconnu (s. Aug.).

This word, a puzzle to Ducange and to Migne, means a *squirrel*, Fr. *écureuil*, and comes from Lat. *sciurus* through some such steps as these : *sciurulus*, *sciuruolus*, *squiuruolus*, *esquiuruolus*, *sesquiurulus*, *sesquiur(r)olus*. The number of variant derivatives is remarkable : for instance in Old and Prov. Eng., *sqwirel*, *sqyrel*, *skuyrrell*, *swirl*, *sqwuylle*, *scorel*, *scurelle*, *skurel*, etc. ; in Godeffroy we find *esperiolus* (1395), *escureulx* (1349), *squirelus* (1429), *escurol*, *esquiriolus*, etc. ; and in the *Carmina Burana*, *spiriolus*. The original root I do not know, for Gk. *σκουροπος* is surely an artefact, corrupt by Volksetymologie ; I do not believe that the squirrel's real original name was, as Oppian seems to think, 'the one who sits under the shadow of his own tail'!

The word occurs in a remarkable tract, *De miraculis Sanctae Scripturae*, in a chapter *De recessu aquarum diluvii*. The monkish writer is struck (as were Darwin and Wallace) by the fact that an island is commonly inhabited by the same (or much the same) animals as the adjoining continent, and he is easily led to the conclusion that island and continent were once conjoined : — Quis enim, verbi gratia, lupos, cervos et silvaticos porcos, et vulpes, taxones (*badgers*) et lepusculos et sesquioulos in Hiberniam deveheret? Here, as Migne remarks, we have a hint of the writers's nationality! He goes on to argue, again in a thoroughly scientific way, that the many fluctuations of the sea, the *inundationes et recessus Oceani*, the tides great and small, the recorded changes of the coastline and encroachments of the sea, make an old connection between mainland and island nothing out of the way and by no means hard to believe : — maria extra terminos antiquos crescere consuescunt et terrarum spatia diminuunt atque praescindunt, sicut et senes nostro adhuc tempore viventes vidisse se confirmant. We may rest assured : — quod illae ferae quae insularum orbibus includuntur non humana diligentia devectae sed in illa divisione insularum a continenti terra repertae esse probantur.

The same chapter is known to scholars as a *locus classicus* for the curious words *Ledo* and *Malina*. There is a good article on these in Du-

cange, but their source and derivation have never been explained. Ledo and Malina are the neap and spring tides, alternating week by week : per alternas hebdomadas Ledonis et Malinae vicissitudo commutatur ; ... Ledo sex horas inundationis et totidem recessus habet, Malina vero grandis per quinque horas ebullit et per septem horas littorum dorsa reteggit, etc. These tide-names were known also to Marcellus Empiricus and to the Venerable Bede. I had hopes that the several accounts might enable a tidal expert to say precisely where such phenomena occurred, but Professor Proudman disappoints me. There are many coasts to which the descriptions do not apply, but many others where they do. The puzzle remains.

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