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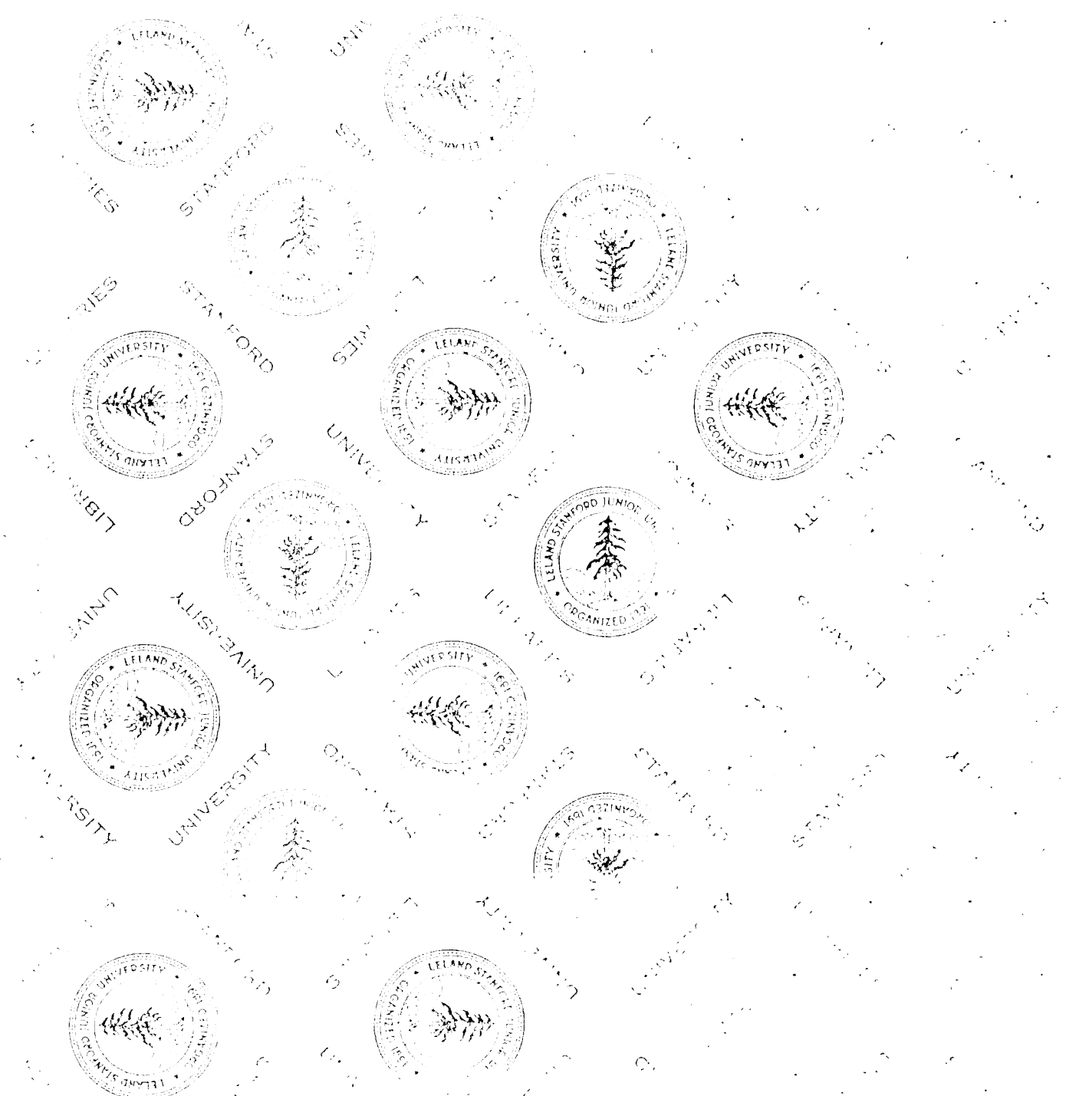
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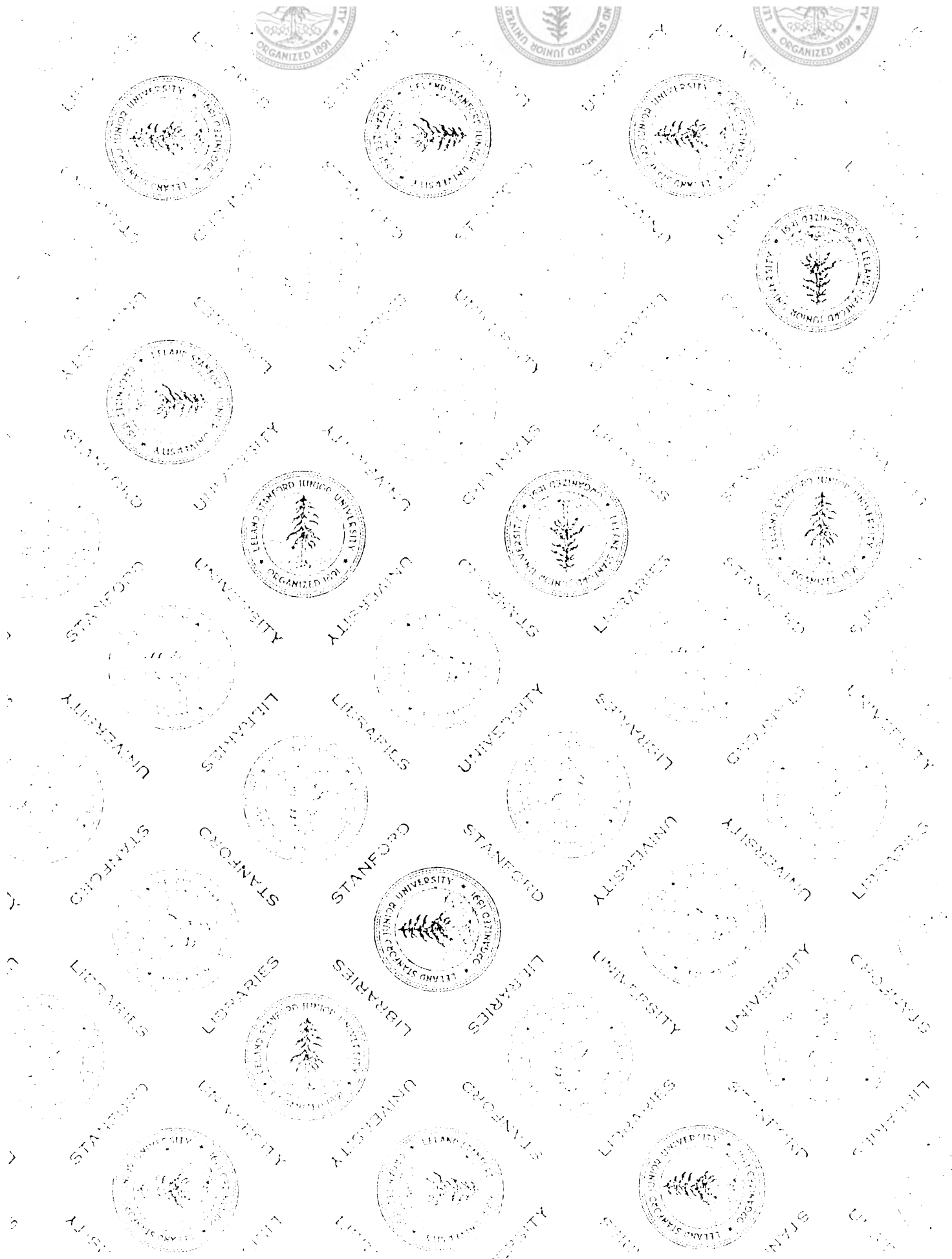
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GENTLEMEN EMINENT IN SCIENCE AND LITERATURE.

THE

FIRST AMERICAN EDITION,

Corrected and improved by the addition of numerous articles relative to

THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE AMERICAN CONTINENT,

ITS GEOGRAPHY, BIOGRAPHY, CIVIL AND NATIONAL HISTORY, AND TO VARIOUS DISCOVERIES IN

SCIENCE AND THE ARTS

UNIVERSITY

IN EIGHTEEN VOLUMES.

VOL. XIII.

Philadelphia:

PUBLISHED BY JOSEPH AND EDWARD PARKER.

1832.

William Brown, Printer.

Persons relieved out of workhouses	-	2213
Persons relieved in ditto	-	none
Occasionally in and out of ditto	-	386
Members of Friendly Societies	-	34
<hr/>		
Annual amount of charitable donations for parish schools	-	£84 0
for other purposes	-	221 18

In the year 1803, the parochial rates amounted to the sum of 9,449, so that in 1815 there had been an increase of nearly 50 per cent.

The following are the results of the last population return: in the year 1700, 23,800 inhabitants; in 1750, 30,900; in 1801, 30,500, a decrease; and in 1811, 30,924; from this it appears that the population in 1811, though greater than that in 1801, scarcely exceeded that in 1750. There is one baptism to 40 inhabitants; one burial to 62, and one marriage to 129.

Houses inhabited	-	6220
Families occupying them	-	6817
Houses building	-	33
Houses uninhabited	-	115
Families employed in agriculture	-	3619
Families in trade	-	1270
All others	-	1928
Males	-	14,308
Females	-	16,616

Total 30,924

See Davies's *View of the Agriculture of North Wales*; Aikin's *Tour through North Wales*; and Nicholson's *Cambrian Traveller's Guide*. (w. s.)

MERMAID, or MERMAN, a marine animal, the upper parts of which are supposed to resemble those of the human species, and the lower the tail of a fish.

This animal, such as it is understood to be, has never come under the observation of any intelligent naturalist, and has therefore given birth to many controversies. Artedi, however, proposes to institute a genus under which the mermaid may be comprehended with these characteristics. SIREN, Dentes Pinnæ duæ tantum in toto corpore. Cauda finnata nulla. Caput, collum et pectus ad umbilicum usque, humanam speciem habent. But, at the same time, he says, "I wish that some skilful ichthyologist would examine this animal, to ascertain whether it be imaginary, or a real fish; it is better to refrain from opinions, than to give them precipitately." *Bibliotheca Ichthyologica*. Others have shown less reserve, and have declared positively that the mermaid is an animal *sui generis*, narrowly resembling the human species.

The ancients describe Sirens, Tritons, and Nereids, as inhabitants of the waters; and it has been generally believed by the natives of all maritime countries, that such beings actually exist; but the discrepancies in the description by those who have seen the mermaid, or merman of modern times, are such that they cannot refer to the same animal. Some affirm it is smooth; others call it hairy; and, according to a third class, it is covered with scales. There is the like difference regarding the real figure of the animal, which is said either to have a single or divided tail; or to have none; as seems to be the case with that alluded to by Artedi.

In an early account of Newfoundland, the narrator describes a "maremaid, or marcman," which he ob-

served within the length of a pike, as a strange creature, which came swimming swiftly towards him, "looking cheerfully on my face, as it had been a woman. By the face, eyes, nose, mouth, chin, ears, neck, and forehead, it seemed to be so beautiful, and in those parts so well proportioned, having round about the head many blue streaks resembling hair, but certainly it was no hair." The observer further remarked, that the shoulders and back, down to the middle, were square, white, and smooth, as the back of a man: and from the middle to the end, it tapered like a broad-hooked arrow. This animal put both its hands on the side of the boat wherein he sat, and strove much to get in, but was repelled by a blow. (See Whitbourne's *Discourse of Newfoundland* in fine.) Probably the narrator's imagination has embellished the appearance and the boldness of the animal. In the year 1671, another marine animal was seen by six negroes, who, being strictly examined on the subject, agreed, in general, that from the head to the middle it resembled a man, and from thence downwards a fish, terminating in a forked tail; the head, face, eyes, and mouth, were like those of a man; the nose extremely flat. Its hair, which was grey, hung over the shoulders; and the beard, also grey, was about seven or eight inches long. Grey hair covered the breast, but the throat and rest of the body were rather white. The size of the animal was about equal to that of a youth of 16 or 17. It stood half out of the water, looking boldly on the negroes, and raising its hand as if to wipe its face: it was within a few paces of them; and, after showing itself three times, plunged into the sea. De Maillet, *Telliamed*, tom. ii. p. 320.

Nearly about the same period, there was given a very distinct account of an animal referred to this tribe, though the author, an English surgeon, does not design it by any name. About three leagues from the mouth of the river Rappahannock in America, while alone in a vessel, he observed, at the distance of about half a stone throw, "a most prodigious creature, much resembling a man, only somewhat larger, standing right up in the water, with his head, neck, shoulders, breast, and waist, to the cubits of his arms, above water; his skin was tawny, much like that of an Indian; the figure of his head was pyramidal and sleek, without hair; his eyes large and black, and so were his eye-brows; his mouth very wide, with a broad black streak on the upper lip, which turned upwards at each end like mustachios. His countenance was grim and terrible. His neck, shoulders, arms, breast, and waist, were like unto the neck, arms, shoulders, breast, and waist of a man. His hands, if he had any, were under water. He seemed to stand with his eyes fixed on me for some time, and afterwards dived down; and a little after rose at somewhat a greater distance, and turned his head towards me again, and then immediately fell a little under water, that I could discern him throw out his arms, and gather them in as a man does when he swims. At last he shot with his head downwards, by which means he cast his tail above the water, which exactly resembled the tail of a fish with a broad fan at the end of it." Glover's *Account of Virginia*, *Ap. Phil. Trans.* vol. xi. p. 625, for 1676.

The mermaid is not confined to any quarter of the globe; for according to Debes, in 1670, one stood near the shore of the Faroe Islands, in sight of many of the inhabitants, during two hours and a half, up to the

navel in the water. "Long hair hung from her head all around her, down to the surface; and she held a fish in her right hand." The modern historian of these islands, Landt, is silent on this subject.

Pontoppidan, a credulous author indeed, yet willing to take a comprehensive view of doubtful subjects, affirms, that if the existence of European mermaids be called in question, it proceeds entirely "from the fabulous stories being generally mixed with the truth." Hundreds of persons, of credit and reputation in the diocese of Bergen, maintained, with the strongest assurances, that they had seen this creature, sometimes at a distance, sometimes quite close to their boats, standing upright. It was formed like a human being down to the middle, but they could not see the rest. Nevertheless, Pontoppidan could find only a single person who had actually seen and handled one out of the water. His informer, a clergyman, said, that in the year 1719, a merman had been cast up dead on the shore, along with other fish. It was much longer than any others described. "The face resembled that of a man, with mouth, forehead, eyes. The nose was flat, and, as it were, pressed down to the face, in which the nostrils have ever been very visible. The breast was not far from the head; the arms seemed to hang to the side, to which they were joined by a thin skin, or membrane. The hands were, in appearance, like to the paws of a sea-calf." *Natural History of Norway*, vol. ii. p. 190, 191. Pontoppidan observes, that the most recent account of the animal related to the year 1723, when three ferrymen affirmed on oath, that one had been seen by them at the distance of not more than 7 or 8 fathoms. In appearance, it resembled an old man with strong limbs and broad shoulders: its skin was coarse, and very hairy. The head was small in proportion to the body, and had short curled black hair, which did not reach below the ears. The face was meagre, the eyes deep sunk, and the beard black. It stood in the same place half a quarter of an hour, exposed down to the breast, and the tail was remarked to taper like that of a fish. The men, beginning to be alarmed, retreated, when the animal, inflating its cheeks, made a kind of roaring noise, and plunged into the water. One of the same ferrymen affirmed, that 20 years before, he had seen a mermaid with long hair and large breasts. Pontoppidan adds, that a creature is often caught on the hooks of fishermen, which he inclines to call the offspring of the merman, some being as large as a child of three years old. One had been taken recently, which, in the upper parts, resembled a child, but the rest of it was like a fish. Vol. ii. p. 195.

Torfæus maintains, that mermaids are seen near the southern coast of Iceland; and according to Olafsen, two have been taken in the surrounding seas; the first in the earlier periods of the history of that island, and the second in 1733. The latter was found in the belly of a shark. Its lower parts were consumed, but the upper were entire. This creature was as large as a boy eight or nine years old; the head shaped like that of a man, with a very prominent occiput; and the forehead broad and round. The ears were situated far back, and had large lobes. On the head was long stiff black hair, hanging down to the shoulders, pretty much resembling the *fucus filiformis*. The skin above the eyelids was greatly wrinkled and bald; and throughout the body, of a clear olive colour. The

eyes resembled those of a cod; and both the cutting teeth and grinders were long, and shaped like pins. The arms were of the natural proportion, and each of the five fingers connected by a large web. The neck was short, the shoulders high, and the breast and back exactly resembling those of a man. Olafsen considers the peculiarities of this animal to be demonstrated in the hair, teeth, and fingers. But, from the rapid change taking place in the stomach of a shark, and the great distance it can speedily traverse, he is almost inclined to believe that these were human remains. Yet the islanders were differently impressed; for all firmly credited this creature to be the *marmenill*; by which name the mermaid is known among them. Olafsen *Voyage en Islande*, tom. iii. p. 223.

The attention of the public has been more lately attracted to accounts of mermaids, supposed to have been seen on the coast of Scotland and Iceland. According to old historians, some remarkable animals were taken on the coast of England, which were called "a triton, or man fish;" but no accurate and authentic description has been transmitted, from which we are enabled to determine regarding their nature. In the course of last century, also, a plate was engraved, we have understood, of a marine animal, by the same denomination, which was taken about the year 1746 or 1747. It is generally credited, among the inhabitants of the northern coast of Scotland, that the mermaid inhabits the neighbouring seas; and Mr. Munro, schoolmaster of Thurso, affirms, that about the year 1797 he observed a figure, like a naked female, sitting on a rock projecting into the sea, at Sandside Head, in the parish of Reay. Its head was covered with long thick light brown hair, flowing down on the shoulders. The forehead was round, the face plump, and the cheeks ruddy; the mouth and lips resembled those of a human being; and the eyes were blue. The arms, fingers, breasts, and abdomen, were as large as those of a full-grown female. This creature was apparently in the act of combing its hair with its fingers, which seemed to afford it pleasure; and it remained thus occupied during some minutes, when it dropped into the sea. The observer did not remark whether the fingers were webbed. On the whole, he infers that this was a marine animal, of which he had a distinct and satisfactory view, and that the portion seen by him bore a narrow resemblance to the human form. But for the dangerous situation it had chosen, and its appearance among the waves, he would have supposed it a woman.—Twelve years later, and not very distant from the same spot, as we conjecture, several persons observed what was supposed a mermaid. It floated at the distance of only a few yards from them, and remained in sight about an hour. Nothing except the face was at first visible; and as the sea run high, the creature sunk gently under the waves, and then re-appeared. The head was very round; the hair thick and long, of a green oil cast; and it appeared troublesome when thrown over the creature's face by the waves. As they receded, it removed its hair with both its hands, which, as well as the arms and fingers, were very long and slender. The last were not webbed. The forehead, nose, and chin, were white, and the whole side face of a bright pink colour; the throat was also white, slender, and smooth; and the smoothness of the skin, on which neither hair nor scales were observed, particularly attracted attention. The face seemed plump

and round; the eyes, of a light grey colour, were small, as also the nose. The mouth was large; and, from the jaw bone, which was straight, the face was apparently short. One of the arms was frequently extended over the head of the animal, as if to frighten a bird, which, hovering about it, seemed to distress it much. When this had no effect, the creature turned round several times successively. Both here, and in the former instance, the sun shone bright, and the objects were sufficiently near the observers.

Nearly three years afterwards, in October 1811, a singular creature is said to have been seen on another part of the coast of Scotland, remote from the former. A peasant made oath in presence of a magistrate, that about four miles south of Campbeltown, his attention was attracted by a white object on a black rock. He crept through a field of corn, and then advanced among the rocks on the shore, until he approached within 12 or 15 paces of it. The upper part was white, and resembled the human form, and tapered gradually towards the tail, which terminated like a fan 12 or 14 inches broad. The under half was of a brindled or reddish grey, apparently covered with scales; but the extremity of the tail itself was of a greenish-red shining colour. Its whole length appeared to be four or five feet, and it was of the thickness of a youth. The head, hair, arms, and body down to the middle, resembled those of a human being; but as the creature lay flat on the rock, and with its head towards the sea, and was constantly stroking and washing its breast, the peasant could not discover whether or not the bosom was formed like that of a woman. The neck and arms seemed short in proportion to the body. Long light brown hair covered the head, which being sometimes raised over it by gusts of wind, the animal leaned towards one side, and with her hand on the other stroked it back, then shifting its position, adjusted it in the same manner on the opposite side. During two hours it remained thus exposed to observation; but the tide having receded, so as to leave the rock dry five feet above the surface of the water, the animal, leaning forward on one arm, then on the other, drew its body towards the edge, and tumbled clumsily into the sea. Now for the first time the face was distinctly seen, having all the appearance of the human aspect, with very hollow eyes, and the cheeks of the same colour as the rest of the face.

Still more lately it has been affirmed, that in the course of autumn, 1819, a creature appeared on the coast of Ireland, about the size of a girl of ten years of age, with a bosom as prominent as that of one of sixteen, having a profusion of long dark brown hair, and full dark eyes. The hands and arms were formed like those of man, with a slight web connecting the upper part of the fingers, which were frequently employed in throwing back and dividing the hair; and the tail appeared like that of a dolphin. This creature remained basking on the rocks during an hour, in the sight of numbers of people, until frightened by the flash of a musket, when it plunged with a scream into the sea.

These are some of the most recent narratives regarding marine animals, that had a resemblance to the human figure. But a question naturally arises, what were these animals? Had they actually some of the parts and proportions of man, or do they belong to another order, on which credulity and inaccurate observation have bestowed a false character?

We are, no doubt, very imperfectly acquainted with a multitude of animals, especially those of the aquatic tribes; and the learned Bishop of Bergen justly exclaims, "Were it possible that the sea could be drained of its waters, what incredible numbers, what infinite variety of uncommon and amazing sea monsters would exhibit themselves to our view, which are now entirely unknown." *Natural History of Norway*, vol. ii. p. 185. Many, however, have supposed, that because a narrow link appears between the human and the brute creation on land, the same should exist in the sea; and various other causes have contributed to the prevalence of this opinion. Nevertheless, the most skillful naturalists of the present age deny the existence of the mermaid: regarding those seen in the sea, as some of the various species of seals; and those exhibited as such on shore, as natural subjects disguised by art. The triton of Ælian and Pliny are different; the *woman fish* of Santos, Barchewitz, Bartholin, and Artedi, cannot be considered the same; nor can any of those animals we have described be referred to the *Musaguc* of the Pelew islands, sixteen feet long, and twelve in circumference, which has been lately classed with "the merman of Norway." The nature and properties of the seal are yet susceptible of many illustrations; and some have found an imperfect resemblance of the human form in certain organs, to the corresponding parts of phocæ. Parsons, *op. Phil. Trans.* vol. xlii. p. 383. A recent voyager to the North remarks, that "these animals, in swimming, often raise themselves as far as the shoulder above the surface of the water. The first I saw in this position was at a considerable distance, and might easily have been mistaken for a man." Laing, p. 107. But the illusion may be heightened still farther; for, according to some authors, the *woman fish* of the African seas, when taken in nets by the Negroes, shrieks and cries like a woman. Captain Colnett relates also, that in the South Seas, when far from land, an animal arose beside the ship, and uttered shrieks and lamentations, so like those proceeding from a woman, as to occasion great alarm. They continued for above three hours, and seemed to increase as the ship withdrew. Captain Colnett conjectured that they came from a female seal that had lost its cub, or a cub that had lost its dam, but he declares that no resemblance could be nearer the human voice. *Voyage to the South Seas*, p. 169. The extreme rarity of what has been called the mermaid, is far from being an argument against its existence. During late years, naturalists scarcely believed in the giraffe and hippopotamus; they still debate concerning the unicorn and the mammoth; and that such a creature lived as the great sea serpent, was resolutely denied, until one was cast up by the waves on our own islands. The existence of a marine animal, partly resembling the human species, is therefore to be considered a question of evidence, which remains to be decided. (c)

MERSEY. See ENGLAND.

MERTHYR TYDVYL, is an ill-built and irregular town of Wales, in the county of Glamorgan. It is situated on the river Tay, in the midst of bleak hills, and derives its importance from the iron forges in its neighbourhood. There is here a parish church, which is a large and handsome building, about eleven meeting-houses, a philosophical society, a printing-house, and a theatre. The iron works are on a very large scale, and strangers are much interested by the celebrated water