

besques which decorate the remains of some ancient building, and which have been multiplied by the fertile pencil of Raphael, the forms which they combine, however repugnant to reason they may be, present agreeable contours. They are the fantastic productions of playful genius; perhaps emblematic representations in the oriental taste, in which were supposed to be concealed under mystical images certain propositions in metaphysics or in morals. We may excuse those who employ their time in attempts to discover the wisdom concealed in the sphinx of Thebes, the pegasus of Thessaly, the minotaur of Crete, or the chimera of Epirus; but it would be absurd to expect seriously to find such productions in nature. As well might we search for the animals described in the Book of Daniel, or for the beast of the Apocalypse.

Neither may we look for the mythological animals of the Persians, creatures of a still bolder imagination: the *martichore*, or man-destroyer, bearing a human head on the body of a lion, terminated by the tail of a scorpion*; the *griffon*, guardian of treasures, half eagle, half lion†; the

* Plin. viii. 31. Arist. lib. ii. cap. 40. Phot. Bibl., Art. 72; Ctes. Indic. Ælian. Anim., iv. 21.

† Ælian, Anim. iv. 27.