

ALBERTUS MAGNUS, THIRTEENTH CENTURY
ZOOLOGIST

BY

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Albert Graf von Boldstädt, son of the nobleman, Count von Boldstädt, was born in Lauingen, Suabia in 1193. In his early youth he left his native home to attend school in Padua. There he entered the Dominican Order in 1223. After the completion of his studies he was given the work of teaching and of organizing schools. He taught at Hildesheim, Freiburg, Strasburg, Ratisbon, Paris and Cologne. At Paris he received the bachelor's degree and the licentiate. At Paris, too, he received the doctor's cap about the year 1245. His almost continuous program of study, teaching and writing was at least partially interrupted several times by the imposition of difficult offices of trust and dignity including the office of provincial of the Dominican Order in Germany, 1254-57, and the bishopric of Ratisbon between the years 1260 and 1262.

Of Albert's voluminous writing, *Opera Omnia*, including theology, philosophy and the natural sciences, two complete editions have been published, one at Lyons in 1651 in twenty-two folio volumes, and the other in Paris in thirty-eight quarto volumes in 1890-1899. The part of his works which treat of plants and animals is contained in the treatise on nature (*Opus naturarum*) and includes *De Plantis* and *De Animalibus*.

De animalibus is divided into twenty-six books; the first nineteen of these are based upon Aristotle's works on animals; the next two books deal with Albert's own observation on the form and structure of animal bodies, the perfections and imperfections of these forms and their causes. Books twenty-two to twenty-six inclusive contain the descriptions of a large number of animals many of which were described by Albert for the first time. The animals described include 113 quadrupeds, 114 birds, 130 aquatic animals, 61 reptiles and reptile-like animals, 41 worms and worm-like animals.

At the suggestion of Richard von Hertwig, Dr. Herman Stadler delivered a lecture entitled "Albert the Great as an independent student" before the Verein für Naturkunde in Munich on March 20, 1905. Stadler published in 1916 and 1920 a complete edition of Albert's *De Animalibus* from the original Cologne manuscript. This splendid and elaborately indexed edition, dedicated to Richard von Hertwig and Erich Wasmann, S. J., appears as volumes 15 and 16 of the *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters* and covers over 1700 pages.

Prof. Heinrich Balss, Haupt Conservator of the zoological collection of the University of Munich, published a monograph through the Munich press (1928) entitled *Albertus Magnus als Zoologe*. In this exposition of 115 pages there are nearly one hundred titles included in the bibliography and literature citations.

When one stops to consider that zoology was but one of practically all of the natural sciences among which Albertus Magnus divided his energies; and that perhaps an even greater amount was devoted to philosophy, theology, teaching and the many other responsibilities and occupations that crowded into and filled his life, there seems to be no other conclusion than that of George Sarton's that Albert's activity was nothing short of miraculous. (Introduction to the history of science, vol. 2, p. 933.)

Albertus, who because of his remarkable versatility won the two significant titles of "The Great" and "Doctor Universalis", was canonized nearly seven centuries since, Sanctus et Doctor Ecclesiae by the present reigning pontiff, Pope Pius XI, on December 16, 1931.