

Excerpt from The Lambton Worm

It was the ugliest thing you ever did see: a worm-like creature, black as pitch and oozing slime. Its head, like a salamander's, had needle sharp teeth and nine holes along each side. It was thin like an eel, but had two legs at the front and two at the back, like a lizard. Despite being small, it twisted and coiled with amazing power. "Whatever kind of fish is this?" he said aloud. Just then an old man appeared from behind and looked at the creature. His face went pale and he quickly made the sign of the cross. "You must not put it back in the river," he said. "It bodes ill but you must choose what to do with it." Then the old man disappeared. With some hesitation, John Lambton put the creature into his basket.

As he walked towards home, he looked again at the hideous creature and shuddered.

Then, one morning, they awoke to find a glistening trail of foul slime leading from the well to the Wear. There, in the middle of the river, wrapped around a rock, was a fully-grown dragon. It was enormous and fearful, with huge coils that gleamed in the morning sun. It had no wings, but a thick muscled body. Its head was large and its mouth full of razor-sharp teeth; poisonous vapours trailed from its nostrils and its mouth as it breathed.

The news spread around the countryside. Some people, brave enough, went as close as they dared to get a glimpse of the creature. Others locked themselves in their homes, or collected their belongings and fled. By day, the dragon rested on its rock, but by night it swam to the bank and coiled itself three times around a hill.