

MEDIÆVAL ART AND THE FAIRFORD WINDOWS.

By MR. J. G. WALLER.

IN the controversy upon the attribution of the Fairford windows to the hand of Albert Durer, Mr. Holt confidently appealed to certain conventions, as the especial property of the artist ; and not content, even here, he put down several subjects, the selection of which were assigned to him. An argument so strange could not fail to be speedily met, and his facts were, one by one, easily disposed of. But it occurred to me, that it was necessary to show that, in principle, Mr. Holt's views were fallacious, and inconsistent with the spirit which guided the art of the Middle Ages. Hence the present paper, which is intended by a few illustrations to prove that the governance of art was so catholic, that in different parts of Christendom, widely separated from each other, not only were the same subjects being treated at the same time, but even in the same way. And this was not confined to the Latin Church, but existed also in the Greek Church, notwithstanding the schism between them, and in the latter, mediæval traditions are preserved to this very day. A singular confirmation of this I received only a few months since, in looking over some photographs from Abyssinia. Among them were some from paintings in their churches, as rudely executed as those efforts of nascent genius we occasionally see chalked upon our walls ; yet through this rude work the subject was indicated by the ecclesiastical convention, though the photographers were evidently puzzled and had erroneously attributed them.

But before I enter into my general subject, I shall allude to two of the conventions which Mr. Holt relied on, viz., the nimbus and the circular aureole or glory about the figure of our Lord in Judgment. As regards the first, to the illustrations already given by others, as identical with that at Fairford, I add two ; one from painted glass at West

Wickham, Kent, date about 1480—90; another from a brass at Childrey, Berks, of a similar date. As for the second, the circular aureole of angels is of so frequent occurrence in art that it would be tiresome to give a list of examples; but the most conclusive fact is, that it is common to the Greek Church at this very hour. One description from their "Guide" (which, however, contains many) will be sufficient. It describes how to paint two cupolas at the entrance of a church, thus:—"Describe a circle and make Christ in the middle with the order of angels." Again, "Describe a circle for heaven, in the midst make the Holy Virgin with the infant Jesus," etc. Those who have seen the Fairford windows will recognise, in the first, an exact counterpart of the arrangement in the Last Judgment. Mr. Holt will hardly say that Albert Durer taught this to the Greek Church.

But now let us examine the principles and the purpose of mediæval art. It would be too long to go back to the early struggles of art in the Christian Church, but we will go at once to that event by which its future and its intention were determined—the second Council of Nicea in the year 787. Two short quotations from the records will serve. It was decreed that "the composition of pictures was *not* the invention of the painter, but the approved legislation and tradition of the Church." Again, "the art *alone* is the painter's, but the ordination and disposition the holy fathers'." Nothing can be clearer than the meaning of these words; it simply shows us, that the painter had nothing to do but to paint his subject as he was told; that the manner in which it was treated was dictated to him; and that the arrangement of his work in the church was according to a law which he had to obey. And if it had not been so, and the artist had been allowed to do as he pleased, of what use would the art have been? For it was not intended for the amusement of dilettanti, but for the instruction of the ignorant and unlearned, when reading was the accomplishment of the few, and books were often bought at the price of an estate. Hence we find the writers of the time so frequently calling "paintings in churches" "the book of the unlearned," and in the Greek, the forcible term of "living writing" has been applied to them. So art was conventionalised, and became thus a language intelligible to the whole Christian

world. It developed itself, as everything that has life does develop, until the sixteenth century, when it is not too much to say it had become a literature, the history of which has yet to be written. How truly it performed its duty as a teacher, in rousing the mind, and awakening thought, I hope to be able to show you by two or three examples; and if we smile sometimes at its simplicity, we must remember that that was really a part of its system, as it was addressed to minds both ignorant and childlike.

It is probable that, during the Middle Ages, each artist or school had its manual or guide to ecclesiastical conventions, and which also contained receipts for the manipulation of the work. In fact, such a manual was discovered amongst the Greek monasteries by M. Didron, as now used by the Greek Church; and when I allude to the "Guide," I speak of that work—the most interesting contribution to the history of art given in our time.

The first illustration shall be the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus. It was of very frequent occurrence, as many examples have been discovered in England, more or less imperfect, and one general mode of treatment was constantly observed. The most recent instance is that at Ulcombe, Kent, found about four years ago, and although much mutilated, it affords us an excellent idea of the subject. The rich man is at a banquet, seated at the head of his table, entertaining his friends. He is giving his commands to the porter at the door, outside of which stands the half-naked beggar spotted all over with leprosy. The action of the porter, rudely as it is executed, expresses the scorn and insolence of the serving-man in obeying his master's orders. He is striding towards the door, staff in one hand and in the other the beggar's dish; for it was usual for the beggars in the Middle Ages to carry a dish for alms, mostly given in food, and it was the custom for them to rattle the spoon against it to attract attention, hence it was called the clap-dish. Now this dish is in the servant's hand, which he holds tilted aside in such a manner, that had it contained a contribution of crumbs from the rich man's table there was small chance of their reaching the poor Lazarus without. This little bit of satire was a happy thought of the artist, which I do not remember to have seen in other instances.

Immediately beneath this we have the sequel of the story.

The rich man, stretched upon a sumptuous couch, is in the agonies of death: a demon clutches at his soul, represented in the usual manner as a small nude figure issuing from his mouth. Opposite to him lies the dying Lazarus, loathsome with disease; an angel descends from heaven to receive his soul.

The subject, however, is not complete here, nor have any examples been found on the walls of our churches, that I am aware of, that are; but we have them in manuscripts, which make up the deficiency. "Abraham's bosom" is represented as a venerable figure, seated, holding the soul of Lazarus in his lap; beneath him, surrounded with flames, lies the soul of the rich man, who, looking upwards, significantly places his finger upon his tongue. The work at Ulcombe is of the thirteenth century.

This subject is frequently associated with that of St. Michael weighing souls, remains of which exist at Ulcombe, the purport of which was to enforce the moral of the necessity of good works yet more. At Ulcombe they are placed near the south door, and generally the former is found at the entrance most used by the rich or chief people of the parish. At the church of St. Lazare at Autun, the beggars still congregate near the side door over which the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man is represented.

I may here, perhaps, make some few remarks upon the introduction of the angel and demon in this subject, because it has precisely the same signification as in that of the Crucifixion as at Fairford, and was common to mediæval art in other like instances. It was laid down as a doctrine, that at the moment when martyrs expire in confessing their faith, "angels carry to the bosom of God their victorious souls, singing songs of triumph." And in the legend of the penitent thief, St. Dismas, as given by Petrus de Natalibus, it is stated that our Lord gave command to an angel to convey him to Paradise. So also the old Latin rhyme,—

"Gestas damnatur, Dismas ad astra levatur"

expresses the idea which the mediæval artist endeavoured to embody.

The demon in mediæval art often plays a part full of grim humour: for instance, the soul of Judas Iscariot is sometimes represented as being tossed from one to another as a

ball; and in Egerton MS. 745 in Brit. Mus. there is an illumination showing the soul of King Dagobert being borne away in triumph by them to the sound of pipe and tabor. Unluckily, they are met by a saint, who speedily routs them and compels them to forego their prey. Also, in the Fairford windows, one most ungallantly endeavours to bear off a lady in a wheel-barrow, who deservedly scratches his face, a practical commentary upon his ill manners.

I will now pass to a subject of great interest, "The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins;" and the example I shall call your attention to is at the west front of Strasburg Cathedral. Nothing in mediæval art north of the Alps surpasses this admirable work; for if it be the true property of art that it should at once possess thought, and be the exciting cause of thought in the beholder, this work is entitled to the highest rank. But in addition to this it is fine in execution, and has certain special technical merits that belong only to sculpture of the best schools.

This subject is generally placed at the door south of the main central entrance at the west end of a cathedral, and occupies this place at Strasburg. The doorway is recessed, and the figures are arranged within the recess, and also on the return of the angle. On the right hand of the spectator entering are the "Wise Virgins." These are headed by the figure of Christ which, placed nearest to the door of the church turning towards them in act of benediction, invites their entrance. These figures, all veiled and in simple but ample drapery, are graceful and varied in attitude, yet full of repose. Their expressions are modest, serene, and placid; each one bears a lamp burning. But the genius of the artist is most shown on the opposite side, where are arranged the five "Foolish Virgins." These are headed by the Tempter, whose figure is placed at the angle of the recess farthest from the door of the church. This fact is worth noting, as it shows even in the arrangement how much was considered in the due telling the story. The conception of this figure is a triumph of genius. It represents a handsome young man, gaily attired in the fashion of the time. His well-fitting jupon is girt at the loins with a jewelled baldric, his hose terminate in the longest and sharpest of pointed shoes; and his rich mantle is fastened on the right shoulder by a handsome clasp. His countenance has a free, joyous,

voluptuous expression, and that indolent look that the Greek artists frequently give to their heads of Bacchus ; and his well-combed locks are bound about his brow with a chaplet of roses. In his right hand he holds an apple, the symbol of the fall, and upon this he appears to be descanting derisively. But the artist has not allowed this fair external to be misunderstood ; for beneath the mantle, crawling over his bare back, are loathsome reptiles, typical of the moral deformity within, that is so gaily masked. To the lady on his left, his discourse appears to have wonderful charms. In an ecstasy of laughter and delight she has dropped her lamp, and it lies broken at her feet ; but it gives her no trouble ; she rather considers it a good joke and points to it, showing how little it affects her conscience. The figure next to her holds her lamp reversed ; the expression is pensive, with a countenance of painful anxiety, and is exceedingly elegant and graceful. That next to her and close to the church door has a similar expression, but more absorbed : she seems as if she had just knocked at the door and had been denied admittance, and with smitten conscience reflects upon consequences. On the right side of the Tempter, on the return face of the angle, are the two other figures to make up the five. One has an air of pleasing voluptuousness ; the other of somewhat insolent indifference. My description does not do justice to this noble work, but at least it shows, that it bears the impress of no common mind.

The subject is a favorite one and has been frequently repeated—a pretty but later instance occurs at the church of Our Lady, at Treves, but I will compare that at Basle as bearing directly upon my argument. Here we have a somewhat earlier and very inferior hand. Yet here is the attempt to carry out the subject in a similar way to that at Strasburg, and remarkable beyond everything, there is the “Tempter with the apple and the laughing Virgin by his side,” showing the same thought at work, but as in one case, it was dealt with by a genius, here it is only by a very ordinary man. Who then was author of the idea ? He of Strasburg, or he of Basle ? The latter is the earlier, but I deny it to either. Both were working at ideas that were common property, the suggestion of which came from the church itself according to the principles I have previously stated. Besides the examples given, the subject will be found at Freiburg in

Breisgau, at the church of St. Denis, at Rheims, Chartres, Amiens, and many other places.

My next illustration will be from one of that class I term "moralities." They are the most interesting of all, as they show the means employed of exciting the imagination by poetical suggestions, but strictly bearing in mind the great office of instruction which art had to perform. Amongst these, that which teaches the moral of human life, commends itself to us, by the interest of the subject and its long history, both in art and literature. In art we can trace it back to the twelfth century, and I shall show that it still influences the popular art prepared for the provinces of some of our continental neighbours. It will be impossible, for me here, to go back into the literature of antiquity, and trace the history of the division of man's life into so many ages. For our purpose, it will be sufficient to accept the fact, that the philosopher and the physiologist had, in very early times attempted to classify the years of man's life into so many definitive periods, and it was in this that the poetry and art of the Middle Ages found the motives of their subject. But besides this phase, there was another which sought to teach the instability of human life or human fortune, and it is under this division of the subject that we get the first development in ecclesiastical art. It is under the form of a wheel, the wheel of fortune or the wheel of human life, that life's uncertainty was attempted to be typified. The earliest example is at Verona, where it appears as a wheel-window in the west-front of the interesting church of S. Zeno, a church so full of early art, that one might almost write its history from the examples it contains. Without a drawing, however, I cannot describe it fully, I shall, therefore, content myself with stating, that a number of figures are represented, rising on the edge of the wheel on one side, and falling on the other. On the top, is a figure sitting in regal dignity, and at the bottom, a prostrate figure dead. The name of Briolotus is attached to this work, a most exceptional, and therefore, interesting fact, for it is rare indeed for an artist's name to be recorded on his work during the Middle Ages.

We will now cross the Alps again, and at the cathedral of Basle we have a very illustrative example of the same description. This is somewhat later in date than the last, and, perhaps, was not completed until early in the

thirteenth century, nevertheless the character is Romanesque. Here, near the periphery of the wheel are a number of spokes like the rungs of a ladder, upon which the figures climb. These are ten in number, and the first, a youth, is about to commence the ascent with one arm on the upper stave and upraised leg. A similar attitude marks the second. The third is more confident, and makes no use of his arms and so the fourth. The fifth figure is seated upon the summit beneath a canopy, and wears a cap of dignity; this marks the zenith of human glory. The sixth figure commences the descent, which exhibits a whimsical rapidity, yet this figure, although fallen from his high estate, holds firmly by the spoke and yet retains the cap of dignity. But the seventh, and eighth are falling precipitately headlong: the ninth has almost ended his rapid course, whilst the tenth and last is stretched out in death at the bottom. This figure is peculiarly interesting, for it represents a mason still holding a stone with his left hand, and in his right his trowel. Death has arrested him in the midst of his labours. Of course this has a special as well as a local significance. The architect or master-mason of the church died during the progress of the work, and this event was seized upon by the artist to enforce the moral of human life. Within the church are two seated figures, representing the two architects holding a consultation with each other upon the fabric. This purpose is so stated in some Latin lines by the side.

At Beauvais we get another instance, also of the Romanesque period, probably, late in the twelfth century. It has the same general characteristics of figures ascending on one side and tumbling down on the other, the sides being here reversed. But it also has some specialities. A figure seated at the top aids those ascending, but thrusts down those who have passed the zenith with a staff to hasten their descent. Whether this figure is intended to indicate human fortune or fate, or whether, as is perhaps more probable, the genius of time assisting those who enter upon life's course, but past the summit hastens their downfall, it is not easy to decide: at any rate the purport is clear enough. There are two small figures, which neither belong to the ascending nor descending series, and but for the assistance derived from the "Guide" of the Greek church, I could not even offer a hint at

the intention of them. But it is probable, they may be intended to symbolize Night and Day, whose ceaseless course measures the duration of human life. Beneath the wheel, as in the former cases, is the figure of one dead. This interesting work is at the north transept of the church of St. Stephen and is much mutilated. Here then we have three examples widely separated from each other in three different countries, yet having the closest analogy with each other.

Amiens Cathedral presents us with a later example of the same subject, and with a treatment somewhat varied. It is at the south transept, and forms a semicircular piece of ornamentation consisting of a series of cusps over a window. Here are 17 figures, eight of which, young and beardless, ascend in a variety of attitudes, by grasping at the cusped projections. On the summit, is a royally-attired figure seated, with a hound at his feet; eight figures also make up the descending group; they are bearded, and as they reach near to the termination of their course, they tumble down headlong in a great variety of attitudes, some of which are whimsically, but forcibly conceived. It is excellently worked, and probably belongs to the close of the 13th century.

Now in none of the foregoing subjects has there been any attempt at discrimination of character, or great distinction of ages. But this development soon ensued. At Sienna Cathedral there is a wheel of human life composed of inlaid work upon the floor, in which the characters are defined, but not having seen it, I can only say upon the authority of those that have, that it is a fine work of the 14th century. In default of having this for consideration, I shall bring before your notice an example from Arundel, MS. 83 in the British Museum, of the same period, which in interest cannot well be exceeded, and is also beautifully executed. This is composed after the manner of a wheel, but at the termination of each spoke, is a medallion containing a subject illustrating one of the phases of human life. These are ten in number, and each has an appropriate legend in Latin. The centre of this wheel has the head of the deity thus inscribed:—"I discern all things at once—I govern all by reason."

The first medallion has the nurse with a baby, (the earliest instance in which I have found this development) sitting by a fire with caldron over it. The legend attached to it alludes to the condition of childhood, "gentle and humble."

The second is a boy sleeking his hair with a comb and holding a mirror, and the legend is "that this age is approved in the glass." But boyhood is not the age of youthful vanity, we may therefore, I think, dispute the propriety of this illustration.

The third is a young man holding a balance to which he is attentive, and the legend makes him say "he will not slip or stumble." The intention is to show, that youth with no experience, thinks that all will come to them as they devise, they at least will not fall.

The fourth is a young man on horseback with hawk on fist. This, with the legend annexed, implies that at a period when the physical development is at its height, life delights in sports of the field and all that requires the exertion of bodily energy.

The fifth is at the summit; here as in previous examples, it is a king on his throne. The legend is, "that he governs the age, and the whole world is his."

The sixth is on the decline, the man enveloped in more ample coverings, holding a staff in his left hand, looks back regretfully upon his past estate. He has now, as the legend says, "taken to himself a staff, and is almost marked by death."

The seventh is an old man blind, leaning upon a staff in his right hand, the other resting upon the shoulder of a little boy who leads him, and with one hand steadies his staff. The legend is, "given up to decrepitude, death to me is life."

The ages of man's life truly end here, and the subjects that follow, merely give the moral. So the eighth shows the old man on his deathbed with a physician by his side. The ninth is a bier, with two candles burning at each end, and a priest reading the offices of the dead. The tenth and last is the tomb, the legends of the two last ending with, "Life has deceived me."

At the four corners are the four main divisions of life, Infancy, Manhood, Age, and Decrepitude.

In this interesting example we have a curious instance of errors, which certainly tend to prove what I have previously advanced, viz., that the mediæval artist acted under instructions given elsewhere. In the original miniature, the legend given to the second age,—the boy with the glass, is mis-

placed, and given to the third,—the youth with the scales. Thus to the last the legend is “Life worthy of the age is approved in the glass,” which clearly belongs to the youth with the mirror; and the other, “I will never be uncertain,—I measure age,” belongs to him with the scales. The artist evidently was not a clerk, and has blundered at his instructions, and most likely not only in this particular. For, as I mentioned, personal vanity is not the characteristic of the boy, it belongs to the youth. That I am justified in thinking then that there is a mistake, I refer you to some short Latin rhymes (Harl. MSS. 5398), on the “Seven Ages.” In these the second age, or boy, is spoken of as flying from restraint and rejoicing in play, in the same feeling exactly as expressed by Schiller in his beautiful poem of the Song of the Bell, a poem which is upon human life in its different phases. His words are literally thus: “From the maiden rushes proud the boy.” And in other examples you will find mediæval art is consistent with this obvious characteristic. The third age, however, in the old Latin rhymes runs thus:—“In speculo vultum considero pecten capillos.” Here we have both the speculum, or mirror, and the combing of the hair alluded to, as before, and which correctly belongs to “adolescens,” or the youth. This blunder—for it certainly is one—is at least a fortunate one for my argument, although I did not want it for proof.

It will be interesting to compare this beautiful development with one on the same plan, but more amplified still, in use in the Greek Church, because there the mediæval traditions are absolutely unbroken, and paintings are still executed by monk artists as they were in the 12th and 13th century. I shall not go through the dry details of the “Guide,” which gives instructions to the artist, but give a brief summary, for in that, you will not fail to perceive, how highly poetical are the suggestions it contains.

Leaving the 14th century, we see, no more, the wheel as a symbol in the moral of human life. But the ages of life still continue to be developed in various ways. Formerly, a series existed at Canterbury Cathedral, confined to six ages, accompanied also by six figures representing the six ages of the world; but at my last visit to that church I was unable to find any traces of it.¹ But in the church of St. Nizier, at

¹ It may nevertheless still be preserved in part, at least.

Troyes, in France, are some painted windows, somewhat mutilated, in which this subject is treated; date the close of the 15th century. Each subject here is accompanied by a female figure, who seems as if performing a part analogous to that of the chorus in Greek tragedy, and points the moral. It possibly may be intended as the genius of life, which changes according to the different phases of human existence, but the intention is sometimes obscure.

The first is a little boy on a hobbyhorse; a female figure in ample drapery, holds a reliquary. Second, This is evidently the lover, to whom a female with long flowing hair, the type of maidenhood, presents a rose. Third, A young man, with hawk on fist, about to mount his horse; this is imperfect; but this idea we saw in our last example. Fourth, The female presents a *monstrance*, in which is the host, to a man holding a book. This must be the man of law or justice, and possibly the host is to remind him of the sacrifice made for all sinners. Fifth, The female is presenting a ship. This must be the man of traffic, or gain; an idea, that in a certain period of life gain is uppermost in the mind. We shall see this further illustrated. Sixth, The female presents to a man upon crutches, a clock: this is plain enough. It is to indicate that his hours are numbered. Seventh, and last, The man is on his death bed, his hands clasped in prayer, by his side this mysterious female is holding an uplifted sword; it is a symbol of Justice, which summons him to judgment. Death holding a mattock, strikes him with a dart.

These details are, perhaps, somewhat tedious; yet the subject so fully illustrates the object of mediæval art, that I shall ask your patience yet further. Of the same period as the last is another example at the Hospital St. Mary, at Ypres. It is on a brass to the memory of Peter Pauwelyns, 1489.

First, Here again we have the nurse with the baby before a fire, over which is a caldron. Second, A woman, seated, is holding out an apple to a child in a go-horse. Third, Two boys pursue butterflies with their hoods. Fourth, Here we get the schoolboy reading a book on the lap of a pedagogue, seated in a chair, and holding in one hand the awful symbol of authority, the birch. Fifth, Boys walking on stilts. Sixth, Boys playing at whip-top. Seventh, Two youths playing at

sword and buckler. Eighth, Young men leading a lady. Whilst, Ninth, A youth plays their wedding-march upon a pipe and tabor; the bridal crown beside. Tenth, Men and women playing at draughts or tables. Eleventh, a man offers a ring to a lady. Twelfth, Men playing at a game which schoolboys are familiar with, viz., Buck, buck, how many horns do I hold up?² Thirteenth, a man, with a rosary, praying before an open chapel. Fourteenth, an old man, going down-hill, with a staff. Fifteenth, Death, a priest, attended by a cleric, is placing lighted tapers in the hands of the old man, propped up in bed with pillows. Sixteenth, A catafalque, with two crosses at head and foot, with lighted candles. This curious example presents us with many analogies with the foregoing; but it is remarkable, that in neither of the two last is very much made of the zenith of human power so conspicuous in early treatment; but I shall presently show you that the idea was not abandoned.

With this we come to the end of the 15th century; and in the 16th century I know of no example in painted glass, or any other decoration of a church. But the subject was by no means lost sight of; and we now find it in popular engravings, having the same object in view, called the degrees, or grades, of human life. The most suggestive I have seen is Italian, about the middle of the 16th century. The "Grades" are represented by nine figures, on so many steps, ascending and descending, and each representative figure has one of an animal, analogous to the condition of the age, accompanied by explanatory couplets. Thus, First, a young child in a go-cart, with a spoon in his hand, has a young pig for his emblem; eating being his principal occupation. Second, a Schoolboy with his books, is like to a young lamb, who gives future adversity no heed. Third, a Youth holding a branch of myrtle, with a little Cupid at his feet, bending his bow; the lover is as a young goat; and is much troubled by the deceits of the God of Love. Fourth, The soldier is represented as a bull, and runs risks because of his great strength. Here we have the analogy, with the "bubble reputation in the cannon's mouth." Fifth, At the summit is the Justice with the fasces, a man of forty years; a lion is his emblem, because king of animals, as he the chief of men. Sixth, the man of fifty years commences the descent. In his hands,

² *Qy.* Is this the game of "moro?"

are his ink-horn and pen-case ; at his feet, books and an hour-glass. He is the man of traffic or business ; his emblem is a fox. Seventh, The man of sixty ; he holds an olive branch ; his helm, cuirass, shield, and spear, are at his feet, and he stands upon them ; meaning, they are no more for him. His emblem is the wolf ; because, as the legend tells us, he puts his care in acquisition, as the wolf in prey. The man of seventy is in long furred robe, spectacles on nose, and slippered feet ; he holds a tablet on which he is reckoning coin. He is likened to the hare-hound ; as a man that has "a sack-full of sins." The man of eighty, blind, and seated upon a tomb, one foot within it ; is as an old ass, that, mumb-ling, eats. The moral is further carried out by representations of heaven and hell, with angels bearing off souls on one side, demons on the other, and, in the centre, death sharpens his scythe.

Now, every one must see the close analogy that exists in this curious composition with the lines of our great poet. How many thousand readers of Shakspeare are there that would ascribe to his invention the moral of the "Seven Ages"? Yet, literally, there is not a single development that has not been anticipated in mediæval art. Does this detract from his genius? Not a whit. It has been said by an eminent American writer, "that the greatest genius is the most indebted." This subject, developed both in art and poetry, Shakspeare takes up with admirable skill ; he uses that which is essential, he rejects that which is not ; and the floating thoughts of centuries he determines, and in a few pithy expressions has condensed them into a whole so complete, that we can never now think of the ages of human life out of his own words. This subject alone is sufficient to prove what a noble teacher was the art of the Middle Ages, when no other way of silently instructing the masses existed. So much, indeed, has this subject influenced the popular mind, that its representation is still prepared on the continent, and is got up in Paris for the provinces.

As regards the Fairford windows, one of the great points of interest in them is, that they are probably one of the latest examples, and also one of the most complete, of the systematic decoration of a whole church according to mediæval traditions ; because, fifty years afterwards, these traditions were almost discarded. They also have a spe-

ciality in the figures presenting the persecutors of the church on one side of the clerestory, and the benefactors on the other, of which I know no other examples. Looking upon them, then, as about the last great work of mediæval art in this country, and probably the most perfect instance in Europe, of a church entirely filled with painted glass of one plan and date, they have an interest that cannot be too highly prized.