


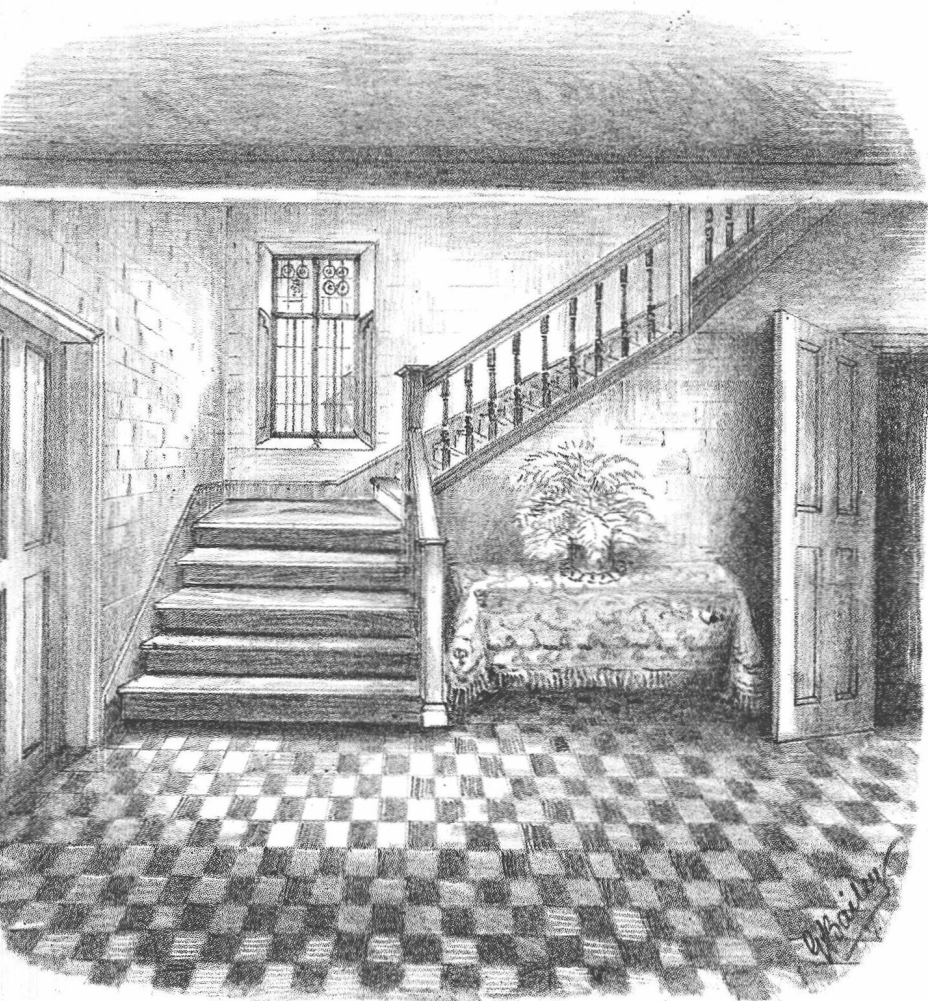
The Stained Glass at Norbury Manor House.

BY GEORGE BAILEY.

FIRST ARTICLE.

 HE ancient mansion of the Fitzherberts, at Norbury, still retains in its windows numerous fragments of stained glass; for the most part they are heraldic, but there are besides several remnants containing figure subjects, *e.g.*, "The Scourging of our Lord," a "Nativity," partly lost, and the first six Months of the Year. It is to these last that we desire to call attention. They are represented on the three plates which accompany this article. The originals are six inches in diameter; that was too large a size for this journal, so, to bring them conveniently within its pages, we have reduced them 5-12ths.

It will be seen on referring to the plates that the glass is the ordinary enamel glass-painting of the fifteenth century, consisting of a deep brown outline, heightened by bright yellow stains, the figures being strongly defined by deep outlines, and there is a shading of lighter brown in parts. These six circles are now placed in the staircase window—a sketch of which is also given. Of the latter six months there remains not a vestige, but these are quite complete; they are interesting, firstly as presenting to our eyes costumes characteristic of the months by an artist of the fifteenth century, and, secondly, as representations of costumes worn during that period. Strutt, writing on this century, says:—"At the close of the fifteenth century the dress of the English was exceedingly



THE STAIRCASE, DERBY MANOR HOUSE.

fantastical and absurd, insomuch that it was even difficult to distinguish the one sex from the other. The men wore petticoats over their lower clothing; their doublets were laced in front like a woman's stays." It will be seen that these remarks will apply to some of the dresses here figured. With regard to the probable date of these fragments, it may be remarked that they were probably painted during the latter half of the century, although they give representations of dresses worn in the reign of Henry IV.,* and, in corroboration of this, we may mention that there is among the Harleian MSS. a little calendar of the year 1411, in which a representation of Winter is given, corresponding in most of its details with that in our plate of January; and those who wish to compare may do so by referring to Fairholt's *Costume in England*, p. 138, in which a copy from this picture is engraved.

We will now describe the Months in order.

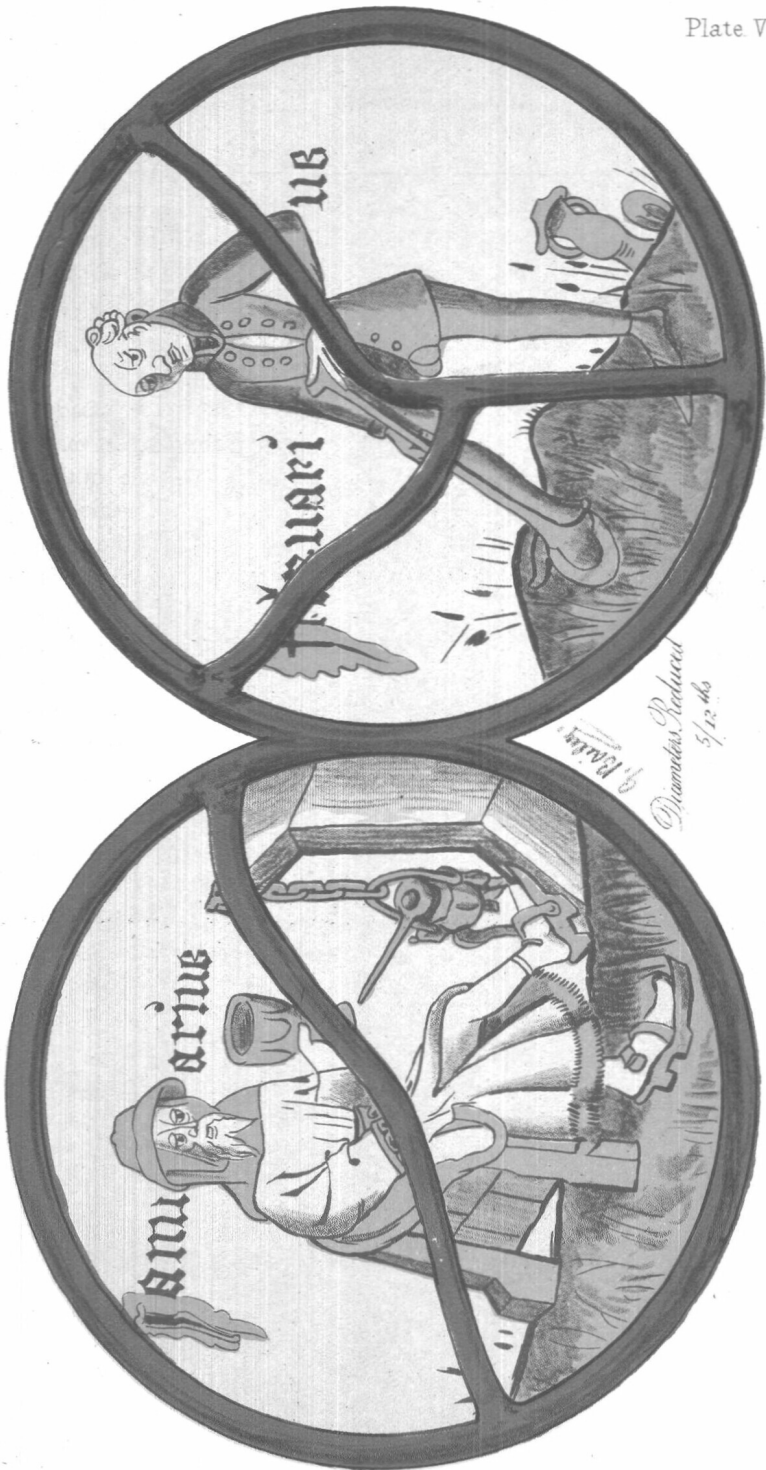
It will be seen that January being a very cold month generally, could be best impersonated by an elderly gentleman clothed in a winter dress, consisting of a felt hat, with the brim turned down, underneath which he wears a close-fitting hood that envelopes the head and descends to his shoulders, forming a kind of cape, and, instead of the usual tunic, he wears a long gown, or robe, with richly embroidered cuffs and girdle, the edges of which robe are trimmed with fur; his legs are clothed in tight-fitting hose, and his feet are protected by shoes with buckles, with the addition of clogs; his chair, also, for greater warmth, is covered with a loose cloth, while he comforts his inner man with some kind of spiced wine which is being heated in a pipkin placed upon a three-legged pot suspended over the fire at which he warms his feet. One can scarcely imagine a better way of representing winter than we have here; and there is some sentiment too, for the man is in the time of life when the forces of nature are low, and it requires all his ingenuity to keep them going at all—it is life's winter with him.

* Mr. James Fowler, F.S.A., whose valuable paper in the *Archæologia* we refer to below, suggests that these medallions are of the time of Henry VII.

The next month, February, is presented to us as a husbandman engaged in tilling the soil, and preparing it to receive the seed which it is his business to plant, and which is, no doubt, contained in the vessel at his side; he wears a dress quite suitable to his occupation, consisting of tight-fitting hose, and a doublet or coat with buttons on each side, by means of which it could be fastened from top to bottom, but, as his labour is one requiring exercise, he has it only fastened half-way, and wears it open from the throat to the waist; he wears on his feet low boots or shoes; his spade being made of wood, shod with iron, as was usual (and we may point out the same kind of spade as being used in one of the windows from Dale Abbey now in Morley Church); he wears no head gear, his hat being placed on the vessel containing the seed he intends to sow. Mr. W. H. St. John Hope suggests that this vessel contains the man's warm drink, and that he has placed his hat over it to keep it from getting cold. It may be so; there is nothing above the commonplace in this emblem, but, it may be noticed in passing, that all the figures represented as engaged in manual labour, are clothed accordingly, and that all are closely shaven; the elderly man alone wearing a beard.

The next month, March, is pictured as a man engaged in the process of training and pruning trees; a characteristic occupation of this month. He uses a very ancient form of pruning hook, and one, to our modern eyes not at all adapted to the purpose. He appears to be engaged in that form of training trees called espaliering. It will be seen that his costume is not unlike that in the previous month, the principal difference being that the coat is laced down the front instead of being buttoned.

February and March being months in which a good deal of hard work has to be done, the artist has clothed them accordingly, but, on turning to the next month, April, we find an entire change in this respect. He is more sumptuously arrayed as becomes his character—that of the month of showers and sunshine, fertilizing and warming the soil, so that it may bring forth flowers and fruits. He bears in his hands grain, and, perhaps, flax. He wears a short, fur-trimmed tunic, with wide



The Models from Glass in Dorbury Manor House

sleeves, bound round the waist with a strap and buckle. A cap shaped like a turban, with a lappet hanging over one side; these appendages being a great feature at the time, were often of great length; and there is slightly more finish about the make of his boots. The reader will call to mind many existing examples of this style of dress in the portrait pictures of our great galleries, both public and private, the head-dresses being all more or less fantastical, some having long streamers hanging down to the feet.

This absurd kind of dress will be especially remarked in the following month of May, where the head-dress is very peculiar, and evidently made of some richly-embroidered material. The dress, too, is much more extreme, consisting of a long petticoat, trimmed with fur round the bottom. Over this is worn a short frock, with fur round the neck and sleeves, and ornamented with jewels round the bottom. This article of dress eventually degenerated into the smock-frock still worn in rural districts, by persons engaged in agricultural pursuits, the one for high days and holidays being very much stitched on the breast, collar and shoulders. They are, however, not by any means so common as they were a few years ago, and it is quite certain they will soon be a thing of the past. A large bunch of some flowering shrub is carried, to indicate one of the most lovely characteristics of this month, and he carries also a hawk, indicative of a pastime much in vogue in those times. The idea intended to be conveyed is of a festive character, as this month was then a time of much rural mirth and gaiety; and Spenser thus writes of May—

“ Then came fair May, the fairest maid on ground,
Deck'd all with dainties of her season's pride;
And throwing flowers out of her lap around :

Lord ! how all creatures laugh'd when her they spied,
And leap'd and danc'd as they had ravish'd been,
And Cupid self about her fluttered all in green.

We now come to the sixth and last of the series, June, represented in the attire of a husbandman engaged in some kind of field labour, but what is the precise kind it is not

easy to make out. He appears to be plucking up bull-rushes by the roots, and uses for the purpose a very ingenious instrument, constructed in such a manner as to obviate much stooping and bending of the back. There is a valuable paper in *Archæologia*, vol. xliv., on "Mediæval Representations of the Months and Seasons," by James Fowler, Esq., F.S.A., from Note 29 appended to which we quote the following—Speaking of weeding implements he describes them as "a staff, terminating in a small fork, with which the weeds are pressed down and fixed, was held in one hand, and another staff of equal length, terminating in a small sickle-shaped hook, with which they were cut off close to the ground was held in the other." Mr. Fowler then further gives a quotation from Palladius (lib. i. sub. fin.) where he speaks of "Falciculæ, quibus solemus abscindere," and also of *Runcos*. Besides the hoeing of corn in the blade, grain crops are weeded, he says, just before the time of flowering, either by hand or by means of a *Runcus* (see also Pliny, xvii. 21). Tusser (edit. 1599, xi. 10) evidently refers to the same implements under the name of a "weedhooke."

"In May get a weedhooke, a crotch and a glove."

In the edition of 1557 (79-80), we have—

"In June get thy weedhoke, thy knife, and thy glove:
and weede out such weede as the corn doth not love.
Slack no time thy weding, for darth nor for cheape:
Thy corn shall reward it, or ever thou reape.

The mayweede doth burne, and the thistle doth freate:
the Tine pulleth downe both the rye and the wheate.
The dock and the brake noieth corn very much:
but bodle for barley, no weede there is such."

It was on account of the weeds which grow so freely in this month that, according to Bede (*De temp. rat*) it was called by the Anglo-Saxons—*Weyd-monath*, or, "Mensis zizaniorum, quod ea tempestate maxime abundant." "Whether this interpretation is correct or not, it is valuable as being the earliest with which we are acquainted, and the one which, probably, was generally received subsequently." For the rest he wears a dress similar to those in January and March, only that we should



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THE WINDOWS FROM GLASS IN PARBURY TAYLOR HOUSE.

judge the coat or tunic was made of two colours of cloth. The glass is a good deal rubbed in parts, so that it is not quite clear; but there are indications of such stripes, and cloths so fashioned were worn. The hat is very similar to one still worn and known as the wide-awake, but in other respects the dress is the same as those just named.

It would be interesting to ascertain whether glass representing the months exists in any other of our old halls or manor houses, as no doubt much of it was used about the date attributed to this, and the costumes, being those in use during an entire century, would seem to indicate that this was quite a conventional way of representing the months coming down from Saxon times, or earlier, the dresses, however, being modified as the fashions changed. There are so many calendars and other MSS. in which the occupations of the months are represented in a similar way to those in our plates, as well as on sculptured stones, inlaid floors, tiles, wall paintings and wood carvings, generally accompanied by the signs of the Zodiac, that we should not wonder if in some of the windows of our old manor houses other examples exist. At present but few examples in glass are known; but Mr. Fowler, in the article from which we have previously quoted—and to which we refer our readers as being full of interest, and in which this subject is exhaustively treated—has mentioned three small medallions in Dewsbury church, Yorkshire, and two others in the Mayor's parlour at Leicester; and of these he has given coloured plates in the *Archæologia*. Besides, there appear to be none known at present except those we now lay before our readers.

It will strike the minds of most observers that it is not a little remarkable that quite a revolution has taken place in dress since these old panes were painted, that of the labouring class having been adopted by the leisured class; and now we see them used by all as being more convenient for these work-a-day times, for there has taken place such a change in men and manners that now absolute hard work and not amusement has become the necessity of all conditions of men, and will continue to be so

until the idler and the frivolous are no longer to be found. The great changes wrought during the last fifty years—one of the most remarkable periods in the world's history—by the discovery of steam as a motive power, and the consequent greater facilities of inter-communication with all parts of the world, have rendered universal knowledge of all kinds a real necessity; and however much the mind may be staggered by such immense changes, the end of them has not yet come. Still greater and more important ones are on the way, as is evident by the advances already made in bringing into use the wondrous power of electricity. This once accomplished as a motive power—and there seems no limit to the changes that will result from it—the advantages in every way will be so immense, we again turn our eyes upon these pieces of painted glass, and rub them, and wonder whether or not this is all a dream.



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The WIFE'S FROM GLASS IN ROXBURY PAPER HOUSE.