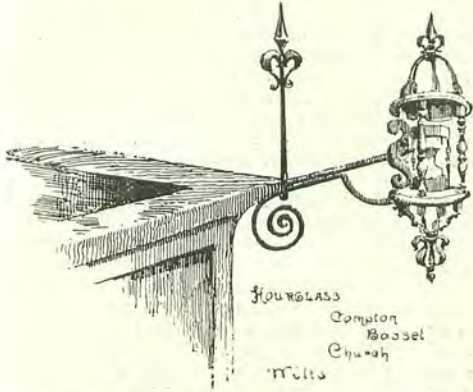


THE HOUR-GLASS.

THERE are few persons who have not heard of such an appliance for indicating the passage of time, as that which gives the title to this article. By a considerable number amongst the elder of my readers, they must have been both seen and employed in their early years.



The children of the present day may form an idea of their appearance, as all must be familiar with their form, represented in miniature, in the "three-minute glasses" employed for marking the time in the boiling of eggs. These hour-glasses took the place of the water-time measure, called the *clepsydra*, an instrument used by the Ancient Greeks, described by Athenæus, and employed for the double purpose of a musical instrument, as well as for that of a clock. It was a graduated vessel, and water was employed, which ran through a small orifice at a certain rate, duly calculated by the constructor. But, of course, it was not absolutely uniform in its measurements, as the rate of the flow varied with the changeful temperature of the atmosphere and barometric pressure, and depended upon the height of the column of water above the orifice. Thus the discovery of the pendulum was a great boon in every respect. The construction of the *clepsydra* (introduced into Rome about 158 B.C., by Scipio Nuisca) followed the discovery of the sun-dial, on which I gave two articles in a former volume. The hour-glasses in which sand took the place of water, and were more portable appliances than the *clepsydra*, were called *clepsammia*, and were employed before the days of Jerome, A.D. 331-420. Indeed they are said to be of extreme antiquity, being mentioned by the Greek dramatist, Baton, 280 B.C. At about the middle of the third century A.D., they seem to have been first revived at Alexandria, according to Cuthbert Bede, in the third century, and, cumbersome as they were at best, people used to carry them about, probably hung to a belt. Representations of them may be seen in pictures by the Old Masters and others, often in company with a skull, as solemn monitors in the cave or cell of an anchorite or monk, or early saint.

Bingham, quoting from Ferrarius (*De Ritu Concion*, lib. I. c. 34), gives the following allusion to the hour-glass in vol. IV. p. 582: "Ferrarius and some others are very positive that they (their sermons) were an hour long; but he is at a loss to tell by what instrument they measured their hour, for he will not venture to affirm that they preached—as the old Greek and Roman orators—by an hour-glass."

The employment of the hour-glass in England appears to date from the time of the Puritans, under Cromwell. But previous

to this another and ingenious method of denoting the passage of time is attributed to the good and God-fearing Alfred the Great, and was subsequently employed, *i.e.*, "candle-clocks." According to Åsser, the authority taken by Edward J. Wood, in his most interesting work, *Curiosities of Clocks*, etc. (Bentley), when Alfred was a fugitive in his own country, he vowed that, were his kingdom restored to him, he would devote the third portion of his time to God's service, and he faithfully fulfilled that vow. Eight hours were spent by him in religious acts and duties, eight to public business, and eight to sleep, refreshment, and study. To carry out his rule, he had six candles made out of seventy-two pennyweights of wax, each of twelve inches length, and the inches marked upon them, and these, being successively lighted, burnt for a period of four hours each, at the rate of an inch every twenty minutes. One of his domestic chaplains was deputed to tend these "candle-clocks," and to give him notice of their wasting. But a difficulty arose through the draughtiness of his primitive dwelling-house, and the wind caused the candles to flare and gutter, and so they burned quicker on one day than another. To remedy this the king had a piece of fine white horn scraped sufficiently thin as to be transparent, and let into close frames of wood, with the result that the candles enclosed therein burned steadily in all weathers. I may now pass on to the time when the hour-glass was specially adopted for service in our churches, and when I mention the fact that, in the middle of the seventeenth century, the zealous, but ill-advised Puritan preachers inflicted sermons of two hours in length, and even upwards, on their congregations, my readers will feel no surprise that the custom resulted in the inauguration of time-registering appliances for their pulpits. It was a need-be for the relief of poor human nature, more especially for the very young and old, and the feeble of both sexes; and the charitable soul that devised the plan deserved well of his country!

That Hogarth should have selected a "Sleeping Congregation" as one of his subjects for satirical representation, is little matter of surprise, and, doubtless, some of my readers have seen an engraving of it. Many indeed must have been the hours of rest and irresponsible thought, and dreams of all manner of scenes and doings far away from the sacred themes propounded by the worthy divine in the pulpit. In the cosy square "pews," lined with green baize and glorified with rows of brass-headed nails, how well they slumbered, and how hot and sunny the mid-day hours. The blue-flies and the bees, and the less-welcome wasps came humming through the great western door, and bumbled up against the little dusty window-panes, through which, dim as they were, a glory of rainbow-light flecked the old pillars and memorial-stones of the floor. And all through the long-drawn sermon the winged intruders droned in harmony with the

"Bummin' awaÿ, like a buz-zard-clock,"

of the parson; while the simple country folk, each one for himself, when roused from his illicit slumbers, acknowledged that he—

"Niver know'd whot a meän'd, but I thowt a 'ad summat to säy,
And I thowt a said whot a owt to 'a said,
An' I comed awaÿ."

There are many stories dating from the sixteenth century respecting the use and abuse of hour-glasses by the divines of those days. One preacher, the Rector of Bibury, who was a daring rebel against this method of curtailing his discourses, took "French leave," and held forth during two hours, turning the glass in the middle of his sermon, and defying the recognised will of the public. The not unnatural result of this *coup de main* was that the squire of the parish "struck," with equal self-assertion on his part, and in behalf of his fellow-sufferers. This he did without verbal protest, but in a way little complimentary to the parson. He waited with due reverence to hear the text and then withdrew, smoked his pipe, and at the expiration of the two hours he returned to be included in the blessing pronounced on his more long-suffering fellow-parishioners. This story is given in Fosbroke's *British Monarchism*.

The turning of the glass a second time was not of very uncommon practice. The monitor was made to tell its tale twice over in solemn silence, eagerly watched by those still waking and wearily gaping amongst the audience, taking little notice of the parson's concluding words. The Sunday's pies were baking into brickbats in the bakers' ovens, and that was a more important conclusion to the thrifty housewives, in their calculations for the Monday's dinner to be supplemented by the *beaux restes* of to-day's.

On one occasion (so writes L'Estrange), when a very prosy divine was slowly eking-out his lengthy discourse, and the second hour was far on its way, the parish clerk, becoming regardless of his subordinate position, and the respect due to his superior, and encouraged by the quiet stealing away of the worn-out



Niche and Hourglass Beaumont Church Berks.

congregation, rose up and addressed the parson; requesting that "when he had done" he would "shut the church door, and push the key under it."

I think it would be desirable, for the benefit of my readers, to give some information as to where a few specimens of these relics of bygone times may be seen. And first I may observe that they were really decorative objects, easily demonstrated to the visitor of many of our old country churches. Some were mounted on carved wooden brackets, other enclosed in wrought-iron frames and a supporting arm of an ornamental character, of which former description the visitor to the lonely church of Cliff, beyond Gravesend, on the coast, will see an example. It is in keeping with the pulpit, which is of carved wood. The dates of both are engraved on the bracket and pulpit, and show that the former was added at a date two years later than the erection of the latter, that of the pulpit, "1634," and that on the shield immediately under the stand of the glass, "1636."

But the material of these frames and brackets was not restricted to iron and wood, for some were made of solid silver, and thus very costly, as, for instance, those of St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet Street.

The fine example in Compton-Bassett Church, Wilts, is described and illustrated in Weale's Quarterly Papers on Architecture. It is of wrought-iron, and the bracket-arm, holding the stand for the glass, is surmounted half way by a large *Fleur de Lys* (see vol. iii. p. 45).

At St. Katharine's Church, Aldgate, you may see an entry, dated "1564," concerning the purchase of one for that pulpit. "Paid for an hour-glass, that hangeth by the pulpit, where the preacher doth make a sermon, that he may know the hour passeth away, one shilling." This was certainly one of a cheaper description than that at Compton-Bassett; but an inspection of the churchwardens' accounts for the Church of St. Helen, Abingdon, Berks, will show that these good people had made a still better bargain, for the entry records the expenditure of "fourpence for an hour-glasse for the pulpitt, A.D. 1591." Of course we must remember that that money was worth far more then than now.

I believe that at Cuxham Church, Oxon, one of the pulpit monitors is still in existence. It was cleaned and painted in 1850 and replaced; but at East Worldham, Hants, the old frame was taken down when the church was rebuilt, and whether replaced I do not know. Others were still to be seen in the churches of Wolvercot and at Elsfeld Beckley in 1846. Also at Marlborough, near Kingsbridge, S. Devon, there was one, in a rusty condition, some thirty years ago or more. Had the rust been carefully removed, and a coat of fine transparent white varnish been brushed over it, the damp would have had no more effect upon it, and the progress of rust and decay been permanently arrested.

St. Edmund's Church, South Burlington, still boasts an ancient relic of this kind, with some pitiful but interesting remains of broken glass. The pulpit, of the fifteenth century, was painted and gilded, and bore the inscription—

"*Inter natos mulierim non surrexit major Johanne Baptista.*"

Of the people in authority at Great Shelsley and Brandsford, Warwickshire, I cannot say much as regards their good feeling for relics of the past, and these connected with the history of our country. The old wooden pulpit being removed to give place to one of stone—now little less than fifty years ago—the interesting old appendage of the original pulpit was put aside into the obscurity of the vestry; and a similar charge may be brought against the parish magnates of Brandsford for the removal from its place on the old wooden pulpit, of its long-time companion and trusty friend of the parish. In 1857 it was yet to be seen, degraded from its former exalted position, in a corner of the western part of the church, which served the purpose of a vestry and place for the bell-ringer. If some of these old servants of a bygone age could give an account of all they had seen and heard during the days of their importance and honour, how many a lost page in the history of our country, our divines and remarkable men would be restored, and circumstances of interest, of which not a record survives, nor will ever be recovered.

Yet two or three more examples of such as still remain to us may be given. One is to be seen at Leigh, in Kent, which is of iron, and maintaining its rightful place, affixed to the pulpit; and another may yet be seen at Sacombe Church, near Hertford, of which Mr. P. Hutchinson gives a description in *Notes and Queries*. The iron frame was affixed to the oak pulpit, dating about the time of Cromwell. The church was "restored," but the ancient relic was not replaced, it had no share in the "restoration" of its abiding place; and on the removal of its old-time companion, it was relegated to the obscurity of the vestry as of no further use, and, therefore, of no further account. Alas! poor handmaid of the church. It is to be hoped that the remonstrances of good Mr. Hutchinson will result in some benefit to antiquarian interests.

Upon one example alone have I seen or heard of a motto, and on this account, that still existing at Hurst, in Berkshire, must have a special interest. In this respect it shares the latter distinction with the majority of sundials. This curious wrought-iron frame and support is surrounded by oak and ivy-leaves, and from the words of warning addressed to the beholder, the old recorder of time served a double purpose. The motto runs thus:—

"As this glass runneth, so man's life passeth!"

In his *Familiar Illustrations of Scottish Character*, Dr. Rogers quotes the Rev. Peter Glas, Minister of Craig, as saying, "It was a pair parish that didna hae a sand-glass." But even these were not altogether "left out in the cold," for some incumbents, whose churches were unsupplied, as well as itinerant preachers, are recorded to have been "attended by a man that brought after him his book and hour-glass."

In St. Helen's, Bishopsgate, there is an altar-tomb of a Sir John and Lady Spencer, on which repose their recumbent effigies. These are composed of alabaster, and the sarcophagus of rich marbles. The apex of the canopy surmounting the tomb represents a skull supporting an hour-glass. At some

time an officious act of vandalism was perpetrated, and the whole tomb was painted white. But reparation of the injury came at last, for the Marquis of Northampton, with better taste for art and veneration for antiquity, had all this paint removed; when, lo and behold! what was thought to be a representation in stone crowning the skull on the canopy, proved to be a genuine ancient hour-glass, still containing the original sand.

In Doo's engraving from Wilkie's "John Knox Preaching before the Lords of the Congregation," in St. Andrews, 1559, an hour-glass may be seen at the preacher's side. Ten years later another representation of the appliance appeared in the frontispiece of *The Bishop's Bible*, in which Bishop Parker is shown in the pulpit engaged in a discourse with one of these timekeepers beside him, 1569. These latter are mentioned in the church accounts of Bishop Stortford, A.D. 1581.

In Brand's *History of Newcastle-on-Tyne*, he alludes to the mention of "one half-hour-glass" in the inventory of the goods of All Saints' Church, taken A.D. 1632, and I fancy such parish records are not a few. It would seem that our ancestors were not satisfied with the discourses of an hour in length, and restricted their preachers' pulpit ministrations to half that period. In this view of what is the wise and expedient rule, it would seem that Her Majesty our own Queen, well-known as a devout and God-fearing woman, very evidently sympathises, and even draws the line still closer, to restrict the length of our preachers' discourses, for an eighteen-minute glass was affixed to the pulpit in the Chapel Royal, Savoy, in 1867, at her command, a very unmistakable hint to our divines of the present day!

It was an ancient custom to inter an hour-glass with the dead, in reference to the fact that time existed no longer for them, and the sands of their lives had run out. Even in the early part of the last century the custom still lingered, and small ones were given to the friends of the departed, when attending the interment, to be placed by the side of the dead, or to be thrown, as we do flowers, into the grave.

The sand-glass for the measurement of time was not restricted to the use of places of worship. There were nautical sand-glasses, which ran for half an hour only; see Captain John Smith's *Seaman's Grammar*, 1627. Here we read the following extract: "or each squadron (half the crew) for eight glasses of four hours, which is a watch." These were evidently thirty-minute bells, and at the end of four hours eight bells were struck.

No emblem is of more common use on memorial-stones. I observed it on that of the celebrated and devoted Mrs. Mompesson, in the churchyard at Eyam, in Derbyshire; and, indeed, no burial-place in the United Kingdom could probably be found without some trace of such a significant and poetical device on the stones of ancient date, if not so frequently on the new. I might give instances of these, combined with pretty and touching inscriptions, but the number of columns which I have already filled, warns me that my space has come to an end, which I must, though regretfully, acknowledge.

S. F. A. CAULFIELD.

