Large Foot Skeletons

Flight 2 Term

14

God Requiring the Past
Ecclesiastes III: 15. "God requireth that which is past".

Upon the great sundial at Oxford College is inscribed the Latin motto: "Perunt et imminuntur"; the hours perish and are replaced. S.B. III: 99.

1570: 158.

Somewhat similar seems to be the sense of this ancient Hebrew motto which has found its way among the compilation of wise sayings, by that greatest of sages: "God requireth that which is past." Both express the instinct of human hearts as to accountability for lost time.

The marginal rendering: "that which is driven away", and others render: "pushed away"—"crowded out." Lane thinks the true rendering is "pursued", and concedes that the expression does undoubtedly refer to time past but not after the common representation of something
left behind us, but rather of something sent before or gone before, which is chased and shall be overtaken.

The Koran, for instance, frequently gives expression to the thought which had its root in the ancient Arabic theology, that the lives of all men and especially their sins are all gone before to meet them at the judgment.

The "flight of time" is a metaphor, common to all ages, tongues and peoples, and it has always been conceived as very rapid: "seus fugit interea fugit irreparabile tempus." Time flies and never can be recalled.

Ovid's Metamorphoses XV: 181. represents the ages as driving away their predecessors, and taking their places as unda impellit in unda

Urgetique prior venienti, urgetque priores
Tempora sie fugiunt hanc habetque sequunt.
"As wave by wave is driven in the sea,
Each urging that which is before, and then
Itself compelled by that behind, again,
So do the hours pursuing, also flee."
The figure in the text presents to the mind the same general image, but adds to it something more uncommon and impressive. The very words used imply or suggest the flying homicide pursued by the avenger or inquisitor of blood. And the figure however unusual is perfectly clear and apprehensible: "God will make inquisition for that which is pursued, that which is gone before us, and which has seemingly fled away and escaped forever. They are not gone. These flying hours, these passages of wrong. They shall be overtaken in their flight-
and made to appear standing up in their lot at some latter day of solemn inquisitions. Since fast though fled from us, is not lost from God's knowledge or remembrance and so

"What was is present, now
The future has already been;
And God demands again the ages fled."

This thought is perfectly consistent with other thoughts which are suggested in this same book. The ages are to reappear in judgment. God shall avenge at his awful bar the centuries of wrong, of treachery, injustice, robbery, and persecution. The "homicidal centuries" shall find no city of refuge in the oblivion of the past. "God will bring into judgment every work in
It is a curious fact that all through the Greek drama runs this indefinite notion of retribution, at sometime in some manner, however long delayed though

"the mills of the gods grind slow", and however secret and subtle its processes though

"The feet of the avenging deity are shod with wool", retribution for wrong must eventually take place—retribution often. Real, positive, and not merely the retribution of natural consequences but of divine decrees. And the traditions and mythologies of the race correspond in this idea, because its root is after all in consciousness and the human conscience—which affirms that there will and must be a day when the wrongs of this life are righted. The drama of history has a final adjustment.
In this text are recognized several momentous facts and truths.

1. The rapid passage of the hours into an irrecoverable past.

2. The certainty that the record of these hours does not pass into oblivion.

3. The Retribution of a future state as a part of the judicial government of God.

4. Indirectly the insignificance of all time in comparison with eternity.

5. Also the value of opportunities which once lost are lost forever.

6. The accents of the soul in a future state are but the voices of our own misspent life.

7. The duty of living with eternity in view.
Who can escape the impression of the swift flight of time?

My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle. Job.

Not only is time passing but we are passing with it. As we say our time is passing away, Tempora mutan

Nos mutamur invillis.

Sixty persons die every minute, three thousand six hun
dred every hour, 86,400 every day, 31,536,000 every year.

Every beat of the pendulum which marks a second of
time carries one soul to the extremity of its arc of
life. And so while we read that the days of our years and
thousand years and ten, the average of life is much smal
ler, in a whole generation 120,000,000 actually passes
away every 33 years—three times a century.

And yet there is an instinct in man that this short life
is not man's whole period of existence.
Dr. Johnson defines time as "a parenthesis of eternity." He may look no further than the material world and the created universe and get a glimpse of infinite time. The pagan defines God as "Time without bounds" and we can see that he got the conception of immeasurable time or duration where he got that of immeasurable space or extension. We look into theseVery depths and we find cycles which are only accomplished after millions of years. Distances which are so great that the human mind faints in the attempt to grasp the idea of universal space. When the unit of measurement by which we measure the distance of fixed stars is the 200,000 miles over which light travels in a second. etc.
During the period in which a volcano cooled and from its
congealed streams of lava a wooded mountain was
formed, while the crater became a calm deep lying lake
generations passed away. It took from three to four thou-
dsand years to complete the transformation. Compare
with such slowness the longest wars appear like the
rapid blazing of a fire of brushwood, and the prolonged
suffering of a human being as the momentary death
of a beetle crushed under our foot. M. Angelo. 60.

Now who can look at all these indications of du-
nation without conceivable limit without feeling in
structively that man is immortal? Why here are mere
hills that exist so long we call them "eternal," and
even the stars and systems whose orbits are so vast
suggesting periods still more vast, are but huge masses of matter. Can it be that man, who subdues the physical creation, sits at his telescope and weighs the stars in abalance and maps out their courses etc. and as Kepler said thinks God's thoughts after him is so short lived that his life is but a mere insignificant fraction in comparison to the period of their duration? Be the conscious, intelligent rational moral creation dies in a few years 120000000 thrice a century, while the outermost Planet of our solar system Neptune is accomplishing two thirds of a single revolution about the sun!! 720:276

Independent of a divine revelation, the instinct of man affirms it cannot be! How much more after Christ has brought light etc. to light!
Chalmers used to say: "What is the object of mathematical science? Magnitude and the proportions of magnitude. But then did I had forgotten two magnitudes: I thought not of the littleness of time;recklessly thought not of the greatness of eternity." S. B: 1: 6. And both of these are the inheritance of man! In his earthly existence he discovers the insignificance of time; in his future state, he is yet to shun the vast proportions of an endless life! And only in the light of that future can we read and interpret this transient existence and its grandly awful significance as the threshold or vestibule of the Hereafter. God requires that which is past because this life is a probation for immortality! This makes every moment precious.
This one thing is often the secret spring of a noble life. Matthew Hale was one of the most industrious of men—he read, thought, wrote with a diligence and success known but to few. His published and unpublished works are numerous and various, and show research into natural philosophy and moral philosophy, mathematics and medicine, anatomy and surgery, his boy and theology. And at the foundation of his success as Dr. J. Stroughton has shown may simply this: he set a becoming value on time. Every moment was precious, as the grains of gold which men sift out from the sand and melt into masses, the rich ingot, which fright our argosies. Hale wrote his Contemplations when on his circuits.
So Dr. Mason good translated Senecio in his carriage and so Dr. Darwin composed nearly all his works in his bulky age, riding as a physician from door to door. One of the professors wrote his orations chiefly before breakfast—chancellors of France. Vaugenessau wrote a bulky and able volume, in the successive daily intervals of delay in serving his dinner, as madame de Genlis composed several of her charming volumes, while waiting for her pupil, the princess to whom she gave daily lessons.

Dr. Bunney learned French and Italian on horseback, and Kirke White became a quick scholar from studies carried on in walks to and from a lawyer's office. Franklin at odd moments gathered his great stock of knowledge, and Elihu Burritt first discovered his faculty of self-improvement in the resolute employment of his fragments of time in the intervals.
of horse-shoeing, mastering eighteen ancient and modern tongues and twenty-two European dialects.

It is the Roman Emperor is said to have exclaimed: 'I have lost today! and many a man must like him make the same confession; but sometimes it is the vain language of vain regret. Melancholy used to note down every lost hour, to reanimate his industry and quicken his conscience and resolution. Jackson of Exeter remarks that in the dissipation of worldly treasure, the frugality of the future may balance the extravagance of the past; but who can say I will take the minute tomorrow to compensate for those I have lost today?' 14:30:162. 15:70:157.
"Opportunity has hair in front; behind she is bald: if you seize her by the forelock you may hold her; but if she suffers to escape not Juniper himself can catch her again.

1570: 144

So represented the old poets and painters, opportunity or occasion. Knox life 204. Speaking to Heart. 18.

Every moment is an opportunity — valuable for what it can accomplish even for this life — invaluable in view of what it can accomplish for the life to come. Seize it and you make it forever yours; lose it and it is lost forever! No amount of sorrow over a forfeited good recalls or recovers it. The future is imperishable, but the past irrecoverable and irrevocable! He who undervalues the worth of his moments not only risks the success and service of his present life, but all that is beyond
Redeeming the price: See Dean Nowam. "Sibyl C."

Forestalling opportunity: (Col. 4:15, Eph. V:16) i.e. buy up an article out of the market which will never be offered so cheap again, in order to make from it the largest possible profit which finds illustration in the fable of the Sibyl who came to the palace of Tarquin Second thrice offering her precious volumes but each time lessened in number and higher in price than before. See another! Life is the agora and the hours are the Sibylline volumes. He who by his diligence and industry secures them is like the wise merchant who watches his opportunity to secure his stocks at the lowest market (table) price while the fool who idly lets opportunity pass, finds the hours each time less in number and more precious because fewer.
Physical nature abounds in illustrations of opportunity. Vessels cruising among arctic seas, sometimes get involved among islands of floating ice, which approach nearer and nearer, until the space which they enclose becomes fearfully narrow, and the only chance of escape to the vessel is to sail through these narrow straits before the fatal moment when like the rush of two continents the masses meet with a terrific crash.

Again here is a strip of sand stretching around a seaside cove, and the rising tide, with each new wave touches a higher flood mark. In a few moments the strip will be completely covered, and those who are gathering shells and seaweed inside the cove cannot escape." 1431:174.
The Value of a Minute.

A small vessel was nearing the steep holmes in the Bristol Channel. The captain stood on the deck, his watch in his hand, his eye fixed on it.

A terrible tempest had driven them onward, and the vessel was a scene of devastation. No one dared to ask, "Is there hope?" Silent consternation filled every heart, made every face pale. The wind and the tide drove the shattered bark fiercely forward. Every moment they were hurrying nearer to the sullen rock which knew no mercy, on which many ill-fated vessels had foundered, all the crew perishing.

Still the captain stood motionless, speechless, his watch in his hand. "We are lost!" was the conviction of many around him.

Suddenly his eye glanced across the sea; he stood erect; another moment, and he cried, "Thank God, we are saved! The tide has turned; in one minute more we should have been on the rocks!" He returned his chronometer, by which he had thus measured the race between time and tide, to his pocket; and if they never felt it before, assuredly both he and his crew were on that day powerfully taught the value of a minute.
The principal value of the moments lies not so much in the relations they bear to our temporal well-being or even earthly usefulness, but again let us affirm it: How is the accepted line - day of Salvation! There is no fatality about sin or ruin, but there is a fatality - a fixed, unalterable law about the gradual rapid certain lapse of life. We need not sin nor forfeit Salvation, but we must grow old and feel the power of habit and die. "Day of grace"
Time is given us to prepare for Eternity; and Eternity will not be too long to regret the loss of time" (1429: 120.

As we stand here at the close of another year, what should be our attitude of mind and heart and will! The year has fled behind us for it is now forever reckoned with the past. Before us for it goes before to judgment. The past struggles to drag it into oblivion. God has his hold upon it and it is summoned as a witness to appear at his bar of judgment where there is no oblivion of past years! That will be a solemn procession of years before the throne—every misspent day and hour and moment—every neglected Sabbath and opportunity will there reappear! Can you face, in self-dependence these "infanted hours"?
Who are our accusers in the future state? What are God's Books of remembrance which register our good and evil deeds? Our own lives. The hours which have been unimproved or perverted to self-destructive purposes become our accusers there. You know these curious arrangements of complex mechanism whereby a watchman's fidelity is noted. If he fails to be at his post on the rounds of duty, he cannot leave his impress on the revolving tablet and a blank becomes his accuser tomorrow. How many blanks on the circular tablet of a year now almost fled, appear before the recording angel—overhien's suggestion at Mrs Lee's funeral that every soul which passes into judgment renders an account for us, indirectly, who might have blessed us.
In the life of Dr. Thomas Arnold, the Abelard of his times, no careful observer can fail to trace that deep consciousness of the invisible world, and that power of bringing it before him in the midst and thus the means of his most active engagements which constituted the peculiarity of his religious life and the moving spring of his whole life. Arnold, life 1: 41, 42.

A golden chain of heavenward thoughts and humble prayers, whether standing or sitting, in the intervals of work or of amusement, linked together his most special and solemn devotions, and this consciousness of an invisible presence gave calmness and collectedness to his whole life amid circumstances and scenes amid disturbing accidents, and made him meet trial with serenity and constancy.
Here is the simple and subtle secret of a life well-spent.
Eternity is never forgotten! The consciousness of the invisible present and the unseen future is always before the mind. Every decision is weighed in the scale of immortality! Its relations to the future are scanned and its bearings in destiny carefully examined!
No man lives truly whose life is not pervaded and permeated by this consciousness. This is walking with God, an unseen companion, whose existence spans the Eternities, is the fellow pilgrim of the soul whose true land of country, habitation are beyond. And only he who thus walks with God may calmly look upon the homes which perish and the reckoning which is to come when God requires the Past.