

CHRISTIAN HERALD

AND SIGNS OF OUR TIMES

OFFICES: BIBLE HOUSE, NEW YORK.

PRINTED BY E. L. LITTLE & CO., NEW YORK.

VOLUME 21.—NUMBER 49.

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NEW YORK, DECEMBER 7, 1898.

PRICE FIVE CENTS.



PRESIDENT MCKINLEY ATTENDING DIVINE SERVICE AT THE METROPOLITAN M. E. CHURCH, WASHINGTON, D. C. SEE PAGE 953J

THE METROPOLITAN PULPIT

A Sermon by...

Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage, D.D.

DARK SAYINGS
ON A HARP.

Text: Ps. 49: 4:

I will open my dark
saying upon the harp.

THE world is full of the inexplicable, the impassable, the unfathomable, the insurmountable. We cannot go three steps in any direction without coming up against a hard wall of mystery, riddles, paradoxes, profundities, labyrinths, problems that we cannot solve, hieroglyphics that we cannot decipher, anagrams we cannot spell out, sphinxes that will not speak. For that reason, David in my text proposed to take up some of these sombre and dark things, and try to set them to sweet music. "I will open my dark sayings on a harp." So I look off upon society and find people in unhappy conjunction of circumstances, and they do not know what it means, and they have a right to ask, Why is this? Why is that? and I think I will be doing a good work by trying to explain some of these strange things and make you more content with your lot, and I shall only be answering questions that have often been asked me, or that we have all asked ourselves, while I try to set these mysteries to music and open my dark sayings on a harp.

Interrogation the first: Why does God take out of this world those who are useful and whom we cannot spare, and leave alive and in good health so many who are only a nuisance to the world? I thought I would begin with the very toughest of all the seeming inscrutables. Many of the most useful men and women die at thirty or forty years of age, while you often find useless people alive at sixty and seventy and eighty. John Careless wrote to Bradford, who was soon to be put to death, saying: "Why doth God suffer me, and such other caterpillars to live, that can do nothing but consume the alms of the church, and take away so many worthy workmen in the Lord's vineyard?" Similar questions are often asked. Here are two men. The one is a noble character and a Christian man; he chooses for a lifetime companion one who has been tenderly reared, and she is worthy of him and he is worthy of her; as merchant, or farmer, or professional man, or mechanic, or artist, he toils to educate and rear his children; he is succeeding but he has not yet established for his family a full competency; he seems indispensable to that household; but one day, before he has paid off the mortgage on his house, he is coming home through a strong northeast wind, and a chill strikes through him, and four days of pneumonia end his earthly career, and the wife and children go into a struggle for shelter and food. His next-door neighbor is a man who, though strong and well, lets his wife support him; he is around at the grocery store, or some general loafing-place, in the evenings, while his wife sews; his boys are imitating his example, and lounge and swagger and swear. All the use that man is in that house is to rave because the coffee is cold when he comes to a late breakfast, or to say cutting things about his wife's looks, when he furnishes nothing for her wardrobe. The best thing that could happen to that family would be that man's funeral: but he declines to die; he lives on and on, and on. So we have all noticed that many of the useful are early cut off, while the parasites have great vital tenacity.

I take up this dark saying on my harp, and give three or four thrums on the string in the way of surmising and hopeful guess. Perhaps the useful man was taken out of the world because he and his family were so constructed that they could not have endured some great prosperity that might have been just ahead, and they altogether might have gone down in the vortex of worldliness which every year swallows up ten thousand households. And so he went while he was humble and consecrated, and they were by the severities of life kept close to Christ and fitted for usefulness here and high seats in heaven, and when they meet at last before the throne they will

acknowledge that, though the furnace was hot, it purified them, and prepared them for an eternal career of glory and reward for which no other kind of life could have fitted them. On the other hand the useless man lived on to fifty, or sixty, or seventy years, because all the ease he ever can have, he must have in this world, and you ought not, therefore, begrudge him his earthly longevity. If the good and useful go early, rejoice for them that they have so soon got through with human life, which at best is a struggle. And if the useless and the bad stay, rejoice that they may be out in the world's fresh air a good many years before their final incarceration.

Interrogation the second: Why do good people have so much trouble, sickness, bankruptcy, persecution, the three black vultures sometimes putting their fierce beaks into one set of jangled nerves? I think now of a good friend I once had. He was a consecrated Christian man, an elder in the church, and as polished a Christian gentleman as ever walked Broadway. First his general health gave out and he hobbled around on a cane, an old man at forty. After a while paralysis struck him. Having by poor health been compelled suddenly to quit business, he lost what property he had. Then his beautiful daughter died; then a son became hopelessly demented. Another son, splendid of mind and commanding of presence, resolved that he would take care of his father's household; but under the swoop of yellow fever at Fernandina, Fla., he suddenly expired. So you know good men and women who have had enough troubles, you think, to crush fifty people. No worldly philosophy could take such a trouble and set it to music, or play it on violin or flute, but I dare to open that dark saying on a Gospel harp.

You wonder that very consecrated people have trouble? Did you ever know any very consecrated man or woman who had not had great trouble? Never! It was through their troubles sanctified that they were made very good. If you find anywhere in this city a man who has now, and always has had, perfect health, and never lost a child, and has always been popular, and never had business struggle or misfortune, who is distinguished for goodness, press the button for a telegraph messenger-boy, and send me word, and I will drop everything and go right away to look at him. There never has been a man like that, and never will be. Who are those arrogant, self-conceited creatures who move about without sympathy for others, and who think more of a St. Bernard dog, or an Alderney cow, or a Southdown sheep, or a Berkshire pig than of a man? They never had any trouble, or the trouble was never sanctified. Who are those men who listen with moist eye as you tell them of suffering, and who have a pathos in their voice, and a kindness in their manner, and an excuse or an alleviation for those gone astray? They are the men who have graduated at the Royal Academy of Trouble, and they have the diploma written in wrinkles on their own countenances. My! my! What heartaches they had! What tears they have wept! What injustice they have suffered! The mightiest influence for purification and salvation is trouble. No diamond fit for a crown until it is cut. No wheat fit for bread till it is ground. There are only three things that can break off a chain—a hammer, a file, or a fire; and trouble is all three of them. The greatest writers, orators, and reformers get much of their force from trouble. What gave to Washington Irving that exquisite tenderness and pathos which will make his books favorites while the English language continues to be written and spoken? An early heartbreak, that he never once mentioned, and when, thirty years after the death of Matilda Hoffman, who was to have been his bride, her father picked up a piece of embroidery and said,

"That is a piece of poor Matilda's workmanship." Washington Irving sank from hilarity into silence and walked away. Out of that lifetime grief the great author dipped his pen's mightiest reinforcement. "Calvin's Institutes of Religion," than which a more wonderful book was never written by human hand, was begun by the author at twenty-five years of age, because of the persecution by Francis, King of France. Faraday toiled for all time on a salary of eighty pounds a year and candles. As every brick of the wall of Babylon was stamped with the letter N, standing for Nebuchadnezzar, so every part of the temple of Christian achievement is stamped with the letter T, standing for trouble.

When in England a man is honored with knighthood, he is struck with the flat of the sword. But those who have come to knighthood in the kingdom of God were first struck, not with the flat of the sword, but with the keen edge of the cimeter. To build his magnificence of character, Paul could not have spared one lash, one prison, one stoning, one anathema, one poisonous viper from the hand, one shipwreck. What is true of individuals is true of nations. The horrors of the American Revolution gave this country this side of the Mississippi river to independence, and the conflict between England and France gave the most of this country west of the Mississippi to the United States. France owned it, but Napoleon, fearing that England would take it, practically made a present to the United States—for he received only \$15,000,000 for Louisiana, Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, Colorado, Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, and the Indian Territory. Out of the fire of the American Revolution came this country east of the Mississippi, out of the European war came that west of the Mississippi river. The British Empire rose to its present overtowering grandeur through gunpowder plot, and Guy Fawkes' conspiracy, and Northampton insurrection, and Walter Raleigh's beheading, and Bacon's bribery, and Cromwell's dissolution of parliament, and the battles of Edge Hill, and the vicissitudes of centuries. So the earth itself, before it could become an appropriate and beautiful residence for the human family, had, according to geology, to be washed by universal deluge, and scorched and made incandescent by universal fires, and pounded by sledge-hammer of icebergs, and wrenched by earthquakes that split continents, and shaken by volcanoes that tossed mountains, and passed through the catastrophes of thousands of years before Paradise became possible, and the groves could shake out their green banners, and the first garden pour its carnage of color between the Gihon and the Hiddekel. Trouble a good thing for the rocks, a good thing for nations, as well as a good thing for individuals. So when you push against me with a sharp interrogation point, Why do the good suffer? I open the dark saying on a harp, and, though I can neither play an organ, or cornet, or hautboy, or bugle, or clarionet, I have taken some lessons on the Gospel harp, and if you would like to hear me I will play you these: "All things work together for good to those who love God." "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." So you will not blame me for opening the dark saying on the Gospel harp—

Your harps, ye trembling saints,
Down from the willows take;
Loud to the praise of love divine
Bid every string awake!

Interrogation third: Why did the good God let sin or trouble come into the world when he might have kept them out? My reply is, He had a good reason. He had reasons that he has never given us. He had reasons which he could no more make us understand in our finite state than the father, starting out on some great and elaborate enterprise, could make the two-year-old child in its armed chair comprehend it. One was to demonstrate what grandeur of character may be achieved on earth by conquering evil. Had there been no evil to conquer and no trouble to console, then this universe would never have known an Abraham, or a Moses, or a Joshua, or an Ezekiel, or a Paul, or a

Christ, or a Washington, or a John Milton, or a John Howard; and a million victories which have been gained by the consecrated spirits of all ages would never have been gained. Had there been no battle, there would have been no victory. Nine-tenths of the anthems of heaven would never have been sung. Heaven could never have been a thousandth part of the heaven that it is. I will not say that I am glad that sin and sorrow did enter, but I do say that I am glad that after God has given all his reasons to an assembled universe, he will be more honored than if sin and sorrow had never entered, and that the unfallen celestial will be outdone, and will put down their trumpets to listen, and it will be in heaven when those who have conquered sin and sorrow shall enter, as it would be in a small singing school on earth, if Thalberg and Gottschalk, and Wagner, and Beethoven, and Rheinberger, and Schumann should all at once enter. The immortal that have been chanting ten thousand years before the throne will say, as they close their librettos: "Oh, if we could only sing like that!" But God will say to those who have never fallen, and consequently have not been redeemed, "You must be silent now; you have not the qualification for this anthem." So they sit with closed lips and folded hands, and sinners saved by grace take up the harmony, for the Bible says "no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth."

A great prima donna, who can now do anything with her voice, told me that when she first started in music her teacher in Berlin told her she could be a good singer, but a certain note she could never reach. "And then," she said, "I went to work and studied and practised for year until I did reach it." But the song of this singer redeemed, the Bible says, the exalted harmonists who have never sinned could not reach and never will reach. Would you like to hear me in a very poor way play a snatch of that tune? I can give you only one bar of the music of this Gospel harp: "Unto him that hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood and hath made us kings and priests unto God and the Lamb, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

But before finally leaving this in terrogatory, Why God let sin come into the world? let me say that great battle seem to be nothing but suffering and out rage at the time of their occurrence, yet after they have been a long while past we can see that it was better for them to have been fought, namely, Salamis, Inkeimann, Toulouse, Arbel, Agincourt, Trafalgar, Blenheim, Lexington, Sedan. So now that the great battles against sin and suffering are going on we can see mostly that which is deplorable. But twenty thousand years from now, standing in glory, we shall appreciate that heaven is better off than if the battle of this world's sin and suffering had never been projected.

But now I come nearer home and put a dark saying on the Gospel harp, a styl of question that is asked a million time every year. Interrogation the fourth: Why do I have it so hard, while other have it so easy? or, Why do I have so much difficulty in getting a livelihood while others go around with a full port monnaie? or, Why must I wear these plain clothes, while others have to push hard to get their wardrobes closed, so crowded are they with brilliant attire? or, Why should I have to work so hard while others have three hundred and sixty-five holidays every year? They are all practically one question. I answer them by saying, It is because the Lord has his favorites, and he puts extra discipline upon you, and extra trial, because he has for you extra glory, extra enthrone and extra felicities. That is no guess of mine, but a divine say-so: "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." "Well," says some one, "I would rather have a little less in heaven and a little more here. Discount my heavenly robe ten per cent and let me now put it on a fur-lined overcoat; put me in a less gorgeous room of the house of many mansions, and let me have a house here in a better neighborhood." No, no; God is not going to roll heaven, which is to be your residence for nine hundred quadrillion of years, to fit up your earthly abode, which you will

occupy at most for less than a century, and where you may perhaps stay only ten years longer, or only one year, or perhaps month more. Now you had better cheerfully let God have his way, for you see, he has been taking care of folks for over six thousand years, and knows how to do it, and can see what is best for you, better than you can yourself. Don't think you are too insignificant to be divinely cared for. It was said that Diana, the goddess, could not be present to keep her temple at Ephesus from burning because she was attending upon the birth of him who was to be Alexander the Great. But tell you that your God and my God is great in small things as well as large things, that he could attend the cradle of a babe, and at the same time the burning of a world.

And God will make it all right with you, and there is one song that you will sing every hour your first ten years in heaven, and the refrain of that song will be, "I am so glad God did not let me have it my own way!" Your case will be all fixed up in heaven, and there will be such a reversal of conditions that we can hardly find each other. So I open your ark saying of despondency and complaint, on my Gospel harp, and give you the first bar of music, for I do not pretend to be much of a player. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall lead them to living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." But, I must confess, I am a little perplexed how some of you good Christians are going to get through the life, because there will be so many there to greet you, and they will all want to shake hands at once, and will all want the first kiss. They will have heard that you are coming, and they will all press around to welcome you, and will want you to say whether you know them after being so long parted.

Amid the tussle and romp of a reunion I tell you whose hand of welcome you had better first clasp, and whose week is entitled to the first kiss. It is the hand and the week of him without whom you would never have got here at all, the Lord Jesus as the darling of the skies as he lies out, "I have loved thee with an ever-lasting love, and the fires could not burn it, and the floods could not drown it."

Then you, my dear people, having no more use for my harp, on which I used to play your dark sayings, and whose chords sometimes snapped, despoiling the symphony, you will take down your own harps from the willows that grow by the eternal water courses, and play together those celestial airs, some of the names of which are entitled, "The King in his Beauty," "The Land that Was Far Off." And as the last dark curtain of mystery is forever lifted, it will be as though all the oratorios that were ever heard had been rolled into one, and "Israel in Egypt," and "Jephthah's Daughter," and Beethoven's "Overture in C," and Ritter's first "Sonata in minor," and the "Creation," and the "Messiah" had been blown from the lips of one trumpet, or blown in by the sweep of one bow, and had dropped from the vibrating chords of one harp.

So I move that we adjourn what is beyond our comprehension; and according to Rollin, the historian, Alexander the Great, having obtained the goldasket in which Darius had kept his rare perfume, used that aromatic casket there to keep his favorite copy of Homer, and called the book, therefore, the "Edition of the Casket," and at night put the casket and his sword under his pillow: "I put, this day, into the perfumed casket of your richest affections and hopes a promise, worth more than anything Homer ever wrote or sword ever conquered: "What I do thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter," and that shall be the "Edition Celestial."

SUNDAY AT THE WHITE HOUSE...

How the Lord's Day is Observed by the Nation's Chief Magistrate. A Worthy Example and its Effect on Washington Society. . . .

DURING the recent period of stress and trial, when the mind of the nation was strained to its utmost tension over the rapidly developing phases of a war in which we had become suddenly involved, Christian people found substantial comfort in the knowledge that the men at the head of affairs were distinguished, no less for their patriotism and high courage, than for their unswerving faith in the divine wisdom, which has thus far controlled the destinies of the American people. They knew, above all, that the "man at the helm," the occupant of the Presidential chair, was an earnest, conscientious Christian, who took no step in public affairs that had not first been made the subject of appeal to the Source of all Wisdom for guidance.

There is something very cheerful and whole-souled about President McKinley's Christianity. He seems to carry it with him all the time, and to use it on every possible occasion. He does not keep it stored away for use on Sundays when he attends church, but scatters it broadcast during his busy week-days at the White House. No visitor can talk with him for any length of time, and not perceive him to be an earnest, active Christian, for he shows it continually in his conversation, and in his life.

Since the enormous cares of a foreign war have been added to the President's already large burden of duties, he has on

President himself asks the blessing on the morning meal. Then he and Mrs. McKinley counsel pleasantly with one another until it is time to leave for church. A Cabinet officer or Secretary may drop in for a moment, but his business must be very important indeed to have the President consider it on Sunday even for an instant. No mail is opened at the White House on this morning, unless its contents are known to be important, and in that case the President's Secretary himself oversees the operation. It is not brought to the President's attention till next morning, if it can be avoided, for his rules in this matter are iron-bound.

Promptly at fifteen minutes of eleven, the black horses and carriage are at the door, ready to take him to church, and promptly at ten minutes of eleven, the President steps into the vehicle. His wife is unfortunately very much of an invalid, and consequently he frequently goes alone to church, unless one of the Cabinet members accompanies him. Just as the minister is about to announce the opening hymn, the President walks down the aisle of the Metropolitan Church, and takes his seat in the fourth pew from the front. There is no noise about it, no whisperings among the congregation, and no attention is paid to his entrance. He quietly seats himself and bows his head in prayer. When the hymn is started, the President sings heartily, and from that time forward, his heart is in the service.

He sings every hymn, reads the psalms, and listens intently to the sermon. He is evidently enjoying it thoroughly, and it does one good to watch him. He is the most modest of men, however, and would be greatly embarrassed to have the attention of the congregation directed towards him. It is his desire to worship in Washington as he worshipped in Canton, Ohio—just as a private citizen.

"I would rather attend some tiny mission, down among the wharves, and be allowed to worship as I wish," he once said, "than come to this large church, and be continually conscious of my position. I want to lay aside my position on Sundays, anyhow."

When the offering is taken, and the ushers pass the plate, the President encloses his gift in an envelope and drops it in with the others. When service is over, and the doxology sung, the nearby portion of the congregation remain seated a moment, while the President rises and passes out. That seems to be the only way in which he can escape many who desire to shake his hand. Before the rest of the congregation is out of the church, he is whirling away to the White House, happy and contented, because for one hour he has been permitted to be just a simple worshiper.

Sunday is his own particular home day. He and Mrs. McKinley spend it together, and it is indeed a day of rest to them. Before dinner is served they occasionally step out to the beautiful White House garden, and to see them thus is worth a great deal; they enjoy themselves so thoroughly, and find such delight in each other's company.

Sunday visitors are rare and the family usually sits down alone to this most pleasant meal of all the week. If Mr. Alger or Mr. Long happen to be present when it is served, they are of course asked to remain; but, knowing the President's desires, they seldom consent to do so. There are just the President and Mrs. McKinley, and, of course, Miss Barber, or Mrs. Ayner McKinley, should they happen to be visiting at the White House. There is always some relative stopping with Mrs. McKinley, for company's sake—either Miss McKinley, or Mrs. Saxton, or one of the two already mentioned.

Dinner over, the family settles down for a long, delightful, home-like afternoon. There are very few callers, and the mansion is very quiet indeed. Frequently Mrs. McKenna, or some very intimate friend, will come in to sit a while, but as a rule Mrs. McKinley discourages people from making Sunday calls. She wants the President to herself on that



METROPOLITAN M. E. CHURCH, WASHINGTON.

day. They occasionally occupy themselves with a little reading. As the afternoon wears on, they sometimes have Sunday music in the "blue room," or a little home concert of some kind, and when evening comes, and tea has been served, they withdraw to the family sitting-room, where the day is finally brought to a reverent close. Mr. McKinley never attends the evening service at the church.

When Sunday at the White House finally closes, it always seems too short to the President and Mrs. McKinley. They invariably wish it might have lasted longer, or that it might come again before another six days have passed. They find in their "day of rest" together, a joy that is known only to hearts that are right with God, and which is more frequently found among humbler folks than among those of high station.

One might think that the President would be tempted to devote his Sundays to receiving his friends, and to making it a day of social enjoyment. In so doing he would only be following the plan of millions of our people, who plead a busy week as an excuse for a godless Sunday. But the President is a Christian of the sterner sort, and will allow nothing short of imperative affairs of State to interfere with his attendance at church, and with the proper observance of the Sabbath. He finds far more pleasure in a quiet day at home with Mrs. McKinley and the family than he would with a house full of callers all day long. His example means much to Washington society. Official families are beginning to follow the ways of the family in the White House, and where the Sabbath used to be a regular reception day, it has now become a real day of rest, if not of spiritual revival.

O time of tranquil joy and holy feeling!
When sacred thoughts, like angels, come
Appealing,
To our tent doors; O eve, to earth and heaven
The sweetest of the seven.

Always Praising.

A man was converted (writes Mr. Moody), and he was just full of praise. He was living in the light all the time. He used to preface everything he said in the meeting with "Praise God!" One night he came to the meeting with his finger all bound up. He had cut it, and cut it pretty bad, too. Well I wondered how he would praise God for this; but he got up and said, "I have cut my finger, but praise God, I didn't cut it off!" If things go against you, just remember they might be a good deal worse.



Photograph by Dinseldale, by special permission.

THE PRESIDENT IN HIS PRIVATE OFFICE.

a few occasions of great public exigency been obliged to vary his Sunday programme. The pastor of the Metropolitan M. E. Church in Washington knows that when the President is not in his pew on Sunday morning, something very extraordinary has occurred to demand his presence at the White House. On a few occasions, during the war with Spain, when startling news arrived on Sunday morning from the front, the Cabinet was assembled, but this was a rare occurrence, and he has usually been permitted to make his Sunday a day of absolute rest from all work, and to devote its hours to worship and spiritual exercises.

On week-days Mr. McKinley is a very early riser. For weeks he was seldom permitted to retire before midnight, and he began to feel his long hours very much. On Sunday morning, breakfast-table at the White House is a pleasant sight. The