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DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON.

SOME OF THE QUESTIONS THAT MEN ARE ALWAYS ASKING.

Why Do Useful Human Beings Die Young? Why Do So Many Good People Have So Much Trouble? Why Is There Sin in the World? - Other Problems.

BROOKLYN, Feb. 24. - The audience that crowded the immense auditorium of the Brooklyn tabernacle and the adjoining lecture room and parlors today united in singing:

Sun of my soul, thou Saviour dear, It is not night if thou be near.

Dr. Talmage preached on the subject: "Dark Sayings on a Harp." Text - Xlix Psalm of David, verse 4: "I will open my dark sayings on a harp."

The world is full of the inexplicable, the impossible, the unfathomable, the insurmountable. We cannot go three steps in any direction without coming in 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 somber 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 conjunctions of circumstances, and they do not know what it means and they have a right to ask, "Why is this?" and "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.

A QUESTION THAT IS OFTEN ASKED.

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 or a positive injury 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 aims 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 absolutely 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 round 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 of society have great vitality.

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. In all the ages there has not a single loafer ever entered heaven. There is no place for him there to hang around. Not in the Temples, for they are full of the most vigorous, alert and rapturous worship. Not on the river bank, for that is the place where the conquerors recline. Not in the gates, because there are multitudes entering, and we are told that at each of the twelve gates there is an angel, and that celestial guard would not allow the place to be blocked up with idlers. 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.

AN INSCRUTABLE MYSTERY, BUT IT HAS ADVANTAGES.

Interrogation the second: Why do so many 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 to suddenly 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 or dulcimer or sackbut, 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 al-

ways been popular and never had business struggle or misfortune, who is distinguished for goodness, pull your wire 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 list 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! 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 got 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 jacked 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 re-enforcement. "Calvin's Institutes of Religion," than which a more wonderful book was never written by human hand, was begun by the author at 25 years of age, because of the persecution by Francis, king of France. Faraday toiled for all time on a salary of £29 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 olden time a man was to be honored with knighthood he was struck with the flat of the sword. But those who have come to the honor of 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 the 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 fifteen million dollars—of 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 overtopping 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 Grantham and Newberry and Marston Moor and Naseby and Dunbar and Sedgemoor and execution of Charles the First and London plague and London fire and London insurrection and Ryehouse plot and the vicissitudes of centuries. So the earth itself, before it could become 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 baglo or clarinet, 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 all possible fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." What a sweet thing is a harp, and I wonder not that in Wales, the country of my ancestors, the harp has become the national instrument and that they have festivals where great prizes are offered in the competition between harp and harp, or that weird Sebastian Erard was much of his time bent over this chordeled and vibrating triangle, and was not satisfied until he had given it a compass of six octaves from E to E, with all the semitones, or that when King Saul was demented the son of Jesse came before him and putting his fingers among the charmed strings of the harp played the devil out of the crazed monarch, or that in heaven there shall be harpers harping with their harps. So you will not blame me for opening the dark saying on the gospel harp.

Your harps, ye trembling satins, Down from the willows take, Loud to the praise of love divine Bidlevery string awake!

THERE IS A REASON IN THIS OFT REPEATED PROBLEM.

Interrogation third: Why did a good God let sin and 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 2-year-old child in its arched 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

(Continued on page three.)

REMEMBER OUR GRAND OPENING SALE OF NEW SPRING GOODS

Commences on Thursday, Feb. 28th. An Immense display of bright new goods at unusually low prices.

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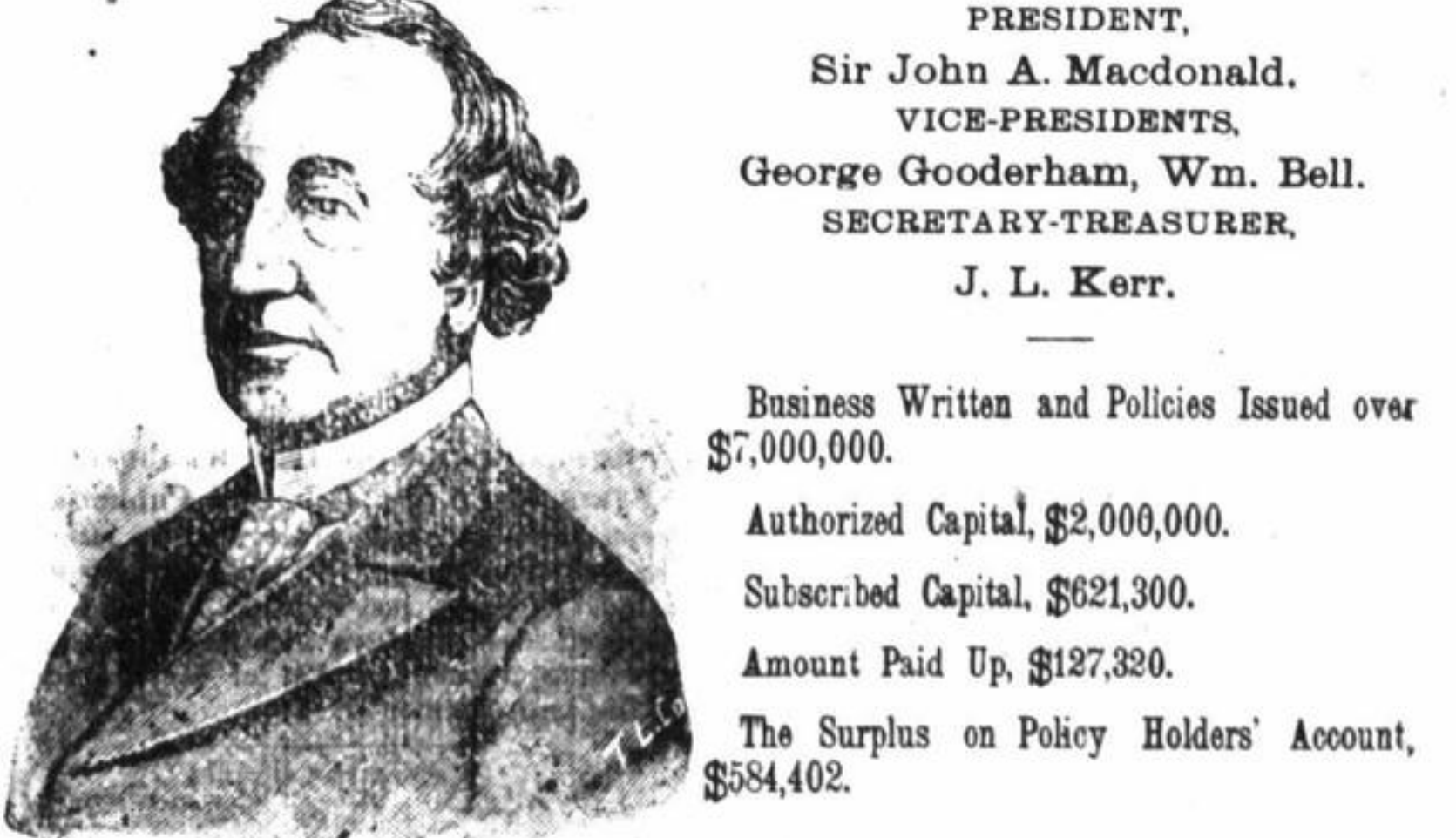
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