DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON.

"A LIVING DOG IS BETTER THAN A DEAD LION."

The Man of Small Gifts Who Uses What He Has Is Worth More Than He of Great Talent Who Allows His Ability to Lie Dormant.

BROOKLYN, March 30.—There was the usual difficulty in getting seats, or even standing room, in the Academy of Music this morning when the service commenced, the ordinary Tabernacle congregation being increased by throngs of persons eager to listen to the eloquent preacher. The service opened with the singing of the Long Metre doxology by the immense audience. Dr. Talmage's subject was, "A Dead Lion," and his text, Eccles. ix, 4: "A living dog is better than a dead lion." Following is a verbatim report of the sermon:

The Bible is the strangest, the loveliest, the mightiest, the weirdest, the best of books. Written by Moses the lawyer, Joshua the soldier, Samuel the judge, Ezra the builder, Job the poet, David the shepherd, Daniel the prime minister, Amos the herdsman, Matthew the custom house officer, Luke the doctor, Paul the scholar, John the exile; and yet a complete harmony from the middle verse of the Bible, which is the eighth verse of the one hundredth and seventeenth Psalm, both ways to the upper and lower lids, and from the shortest passage, which is the thirty-fifth verse of the eleventh chapter of John, to the longest verse, which is the ninth verse of the eighth chapter of Esther, and yet not an imperfection in all the 773,693 words which it is composed of. It not only reaches over the past, but over the future; has in it a ferry-boat, as in second Samuel; and a telegraph wire, as in Job; and a railroad train, as in Nahum; and introduces us to a foundryman by the name of Tubal Cain, and a shipbuilder by the name of Noah, and an architect by the name of Aholiab, and tells us how many stables Solomon had to take care of his horses, and how much he paid for those horses. But few things in this versatile and comprehensive book interest me so much as its apothegms, those short, terse, sententious, epigrammatic sayings, of which my text is one—"A living dog is better than a dead lion."

THE DOGS AND LIONS OF THE BIBLE.

Here the lion stands for nobility, and the dog for meanness. You must know that the dog mentioned in the text is not one of our American or European or Scottish dogs that, in our mind, is a synonym for the beautiful, the graceful, the affectionate, the sagacious, and the true. The St. Bernard dog is a hero, and if you doubt it, ask the snows of the Alps, out of which he picked the exhausted traveler. The shepherd dog is a poem, and if you doubt it, ask the highlands of Scotland. The Arctic dog is the rescue of explorers, and if you doubt it, ask Dr. Kane's expedition. The watch dog is a living protection, and if you doubt it, ask ten thousand homesteads over whose safety he watched last night. But Solomon, the author of my text, lived in Jerusalem, and the dog he speaks of in the text was a dog in Jerusalem. Last December I passed days and nights within a stone's throw of where Solomon wrote this text, and from what I saw of the canines of Jerusalem by day, and heard of them by night, I can understand the slight appreciation my text puts upon the dog of Palestine. It is lean and snarly and disgusting, and afflicted with parasites, and takes revenge on the human race by filling the nights with clamor. All up and down the Bible, the most of which was written in Palestine or Syria, or contiguous lands, the dog is used in contemptuous comparison. Hazael said: "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" In self abnegation the Syro-Phœnician woman said: "Even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the master's table." Paul says, in Philippians: "Beware of dogs;" and St. John, speaking of heaven, says: "Without are dogs."

On the other hand the lion is healthy, strong, and loud voiced, and at its roar the forests echo and the mountains tremble. It is marvelous for strength, and when its hide is removed the muscular compactness is something wonderful, and the knife of the dissector bounds back from the tendons. By the clearing off of the forests of Palestine and the use of firearms, of which the lion is particularly afraid, they have disappeared from places where once they ranged, but they were very bold in olden times. They attacked an army of Xerxes while marching through Macedonia. They were so numerous that one thousand lions were slain in forty years in the amphitheatre of Rome. The Barbary lion, the Cape lion, the Senegal lion, the Assyrian lion, make up a most absorbing and exciting chapter in natural history. As most of the Bible was written in regions lion haunted, this creature appears in almost all parts of the Bible as a simile. David understood its habits of night prowling and day slumbering, as is seen from his description: "The young lions roar after their prey and seek their meat from God. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens." And again he cries out, "My soul is among lions." Moses knew them and said, "Judah is couched like a lion." Samson knew them, for he took honey from the carcass of a slain lion. Solomon knew them and says, "The king's wrath is as the roar of a lion;" and again, "The slothful man says, There is a lion in the way." Isaiah knew them, and says, in the millennium, "The lion shall eat straw like an ox." Ezekiel knew them, and says, "The third was as the face of a lion." Paul knew them and says: "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." Peter knew them and says, "The devil as a roaring lion walketh about." St. John knew them, and says of Christ, "Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah!"

THE MEANING OF THE TEXT

Now, what does my text mean when it puts a living dog and a dead lion side by side, and says the former is better than the latter? It means that small faculties actively used are of more value than great faculties unemployed. How often you see it! Some man with limited capacity vastly useful. He takes that which God has given him and says: "My mental endowment is not large and the world would not rate me high for my intelligence, and my vocabulary is limited, and my education was defective, but here goes what I have for God and salvation, and the making of the world good and happy." He puts in a word here and a word there, encourages a faint hearted man, gives a Scripture passage in consolation to some bereft woman, picks up a child fallen in the street and helps him brush off the dust and puts a five-cent piece in his hand, telling him not to cry, so that the boy is singing before he gets round the corner; waiting on everybody that has a letter to carry or a message to deliver; comes into a rail train, or stage coach, or depot, or shop, with a smiling face that sets everybody to thinking. "If that man can, with what appears small equipment in life, be happy, why cannot I, possessing far more than he has, be equally happy?" One day of that kind of doing things may not amount to much, but forty years of that—no one but God himself can appreciate its immensity.

There are tens of thousands of such people. Their circle of acquaintance is small. The man is known over at the store. He is clerk or weigher or drayman, and he is known among those who sit near him clear back in the church under the galleries, and at the ferry gates where he comes in knocking the snow from his shoes, and threshing his arms around his body to revive circulation, on some January morning. But if he should die to-morrow there would not be a hundred people who would know about it. He will never have his name in the newspapers but once, and that will be the announcement of his death, if some one will pay for the insertion, so much a line for the two lines. But he will come up gloriously on the other side, and the God who has watched him all through will give him a higher seat and a better mansion and a grander eternity than many a man who had on earth, before his name, the word honorable, and after his name LL. D. and F. R. S. Christ said in Luke, the sixth chapter, that in heaven some who had it hard here would laugh there. And I think a laugh of delight and congratulation will run around the heavenly circles when this humble one of whom I spoke shall go up and take the precedence of many Christians who in this world felt themselves to be of ninety-nine per cent. more importance. The whisper will go round the galleries of the upper temple: "Can it be possible that that was the weigher in our store?" "Can it be possible that that was the car driver on our street?" "Can it be possible that was the sexton of our church?" "Can it be possible that is the man that heaved coal into our cellar?" "I never could have thought it. What a reversal of things! We were clear ahead of him on earth, but he is clear ahead of us in heaven. Why, we had ten times more brains than he had, we had a thousand times more money than he had, we had social position a mile higher than he had, we had innumerable opportunities more than he had, but it seems now that he accomplished more with his one talent than we did with our ten;" while Solomon, standing among the thrones, overhears the whisper, and sees the wonderment, and will, with benignant and all suggestive smile, say, "Yes, it is as I told the world many centuries ago—better is small faculty actively used than great talent unemployed, 'better is a living dog than a dead lion.'"

THERE ARE PLENTY OF DEAD LIONS.

The simple fact is that the world has been, and the world is now, full of dead lions. They are people of great capacity and large opportunity, doing nothing for the improvement of society, nothing for the overthrow of evil, nothing for the salvation of souls. Some of them are monetary lions. They have accumulated so many hundreds of thousands of dollars that you can feel their tread when they walk through any street or come into any circle. They can by one financial move upset the money market. Instead of the ten per cent. of their income which the Bible lays down as the proper proportion of their contribution to the cause of God, they do not give five per cent., or three per cent., or two per cent., or one per cent., or a half per cent., or a quarter per cent. That they are lions, no one doubts. When they roar, Wall street, State street, Lombard street and the Bourse tremble. In a few years they will lie down and die. They will have a great funeral, and a long row of fine carriages, and mightiest requiems will roll from the organ, and polished shaft of Aberdeen granite will indicate where their dust lies, but for all use to the world that man might as well have never lived. As an experiment as to how much he can carry with him, put a ten cent piece in the palm of his dead hand, and five years after open the tomb and you will find that he has dropped even the ten cent piece. A lion! Yes, but a dead lion! He left all his treasures on earth, and has no treasures in heaven. What shall the stonecutter put upon the obelisk over him? I suggest, let it be the man's name, then the date of his birth, then the date of his death, then the appropriate Scripture passage, "Better is a living dog than a dead lion."

But I thank God that we are having just now an outburst of splendid beneficence that is to increase until the earth is girdled with it. It is spreading with the speed of an epidemic, but with just the opposite effect of an epidemic. Do you not notice how wealthy men are opening free libraries, and building churches in their native village? Have you not seen how men of large means, instead of leaving great philanthropies in their wills for disappointed heirs to quarrel about, and the orphan courts to swamp, are becoming their own executors and administrators? After putting aside enough for their families (for "he that provideth not for his own, and especially those of his own household, is worse than an infidel"), they are saying: "What can I do, not after I am dead, but while living, and in full possession of my faculties, to properly direct the building of the churches, or the hospitals, or the colleges, or the libraries that I design for the public welfare, and while yet I have full capacity to enjoy the satisfaction of seeing the good accomplished? There are bad fashions and good fashions, and, whether good or bad, fashions are mighty. One of the good fashions now starting will sweep the earth—the fashion for wealthy men to distribute, while yet alive, their surplus accumulation. It is being helped by the fact that so many large estates have, immediately after the testator's death, gone into litigation. Attorneys with large fees are employed on both sides, and the case goes on month after month, and year after year, and after one court decides, it ascends to another court and is decided in the opposite direction, and then new evidence is found, and the trials are all repeated. The children, who at the father's funeral seemed to have an uncontrollable grief, after the will is read go into elaborate process to prove that the father was crazy, and therefore incompetent to make a will; and there are men on the jury who think that the fact that the testator gave so much of his money to the Bible society, and the missionary society, or the opening of a free library, is proof positive that he was insane, and that he knew not what he was signing when he subscribed to the words: "In the name of God, amen. I, being of sound mind, do make this my last will and testament."

NOW IS THE TIME FOR GOOD WORK.

The torn wills, the fraudulent wills, the broken wills have recently been made such a spectacle to angels and to men that all over the land successful men are calling in architects and saying to them: "How much would it cost for me to build a picture gallery for our town?" or, "What plans can you draw me out for a concert hall?" or, "I am specially interested in 'the incurables,' and how large a building would accommodate three hundred of such patients?" or, "The Church of God has been a great help to me all my life, and I want you to draw me a plan for a church, commodious, beautiful, well ventilated, and with plenty of windows to let in the light; I want you to get right at work in making out plans of such a building, for, though I am well now, life is uncertain, and before I leave the world I want to see something done that will be an appropriate acknowledgment of the goodness of God to me and mine; now when can I hear from you?"

In our own city we have many examples of this. What a grandeur of beneficence has our fellow citizen, Mr. Pratt, demonstrated, building educational institutions which will put their hands on the nineteenth century, and the twentieth century, and all the centuries! All honor to such a man! Do not say so when he is dead, say it now. It would be a good thing if some of the eulogies we chisel on tombstones were written on paper in time for the philanthropists to read them while yet they are alive. Less post-mortem praise, and more ante-mortem!

A poor Scotch lad came to America at twelve years of age, and went to Pittsburg. He looked around for work, and became an engineer in a cellar, then rose to become a telegraph messenger boy, then rose to a position in a railroad office, then rose to a place in a telegraph office, then rose to be superintendent of a railroad, then rose till he became an iron and steel manufacturer, then rose until he opened free libraries in his native land, and last month a free library in Allegheny City, and now offers two million dollars for a free library in Pittsburg. This example will be catching until the earth is revolutionized. How majestic such men in comparison with some I wot of, who amass wealth and clutch it with both hands until death begins to feel for their heart strings, and then they dictate to an attorney a last will and testament, in which they spite some daughter because she married against her father's wish, and fling a few crusts to God and suffering humanity, as much as to say: "I have kept this surplus property, through all these severe winters, and through all these long years, from a needy and suffering world, and would keep it longer if I could, but as I must give it up, take it, and much good may it do you!" Now we begin to understand the text: "Better a living dog than a dead lion."

THE DEAD LIONS.

Who would attempt to write the obituary of the dead lions of commerce, the dead lions of law, the dead lions of medicine, the dead lions of social influence? Vast capacity had they and mighty range, and other men in their presence were as powerless as the antelope or heifer or giraffe when from the jungle a Numidian lion springs upon its prey. But they get through with life. They lay down in their magnificent lair. They have made their last sharp bargain. They have spoken their last hard word. They have committed their last mean act. When a tawny inhabitant of the desert rolls over helpless, the lioness and whelps fill the air with shrieks and howls and lash themselves into lamentation, and it is a genuine grief for the poor things. But when this dead lion of monstrous uselessness expires, there is nothing but dramatized woe, for "Better is a living dog than a dead lion."

My text also means that an opportunity of the living present is better than a great opportunity passed. We spend much of our time in saying: "If I only had." We can all look back and see some occasion where we might have done a great deed, or might have effected an important rescue, or we might have dealt a stroke that would have accomplished a vast result. Through stupidity or lack of appreciation of the crisis, or through procrastination, we let the chance go by. How much time we have wasted in thinking of what we might have said or might have done! We spend hours and days and years in walking around that dead lion. We cannot resuscitate it. It will never open its eyes again. There will never be another spring in its paw. Dead as any feline terror of South Africa, through whose heart thirty years ago Gordon Cumming sent the slug. Don't let us give any more time to the deploring of the dead past. There are other opportunities remaining. They may not be as great, but they are worth our attention. Small opportunities all around, opportunities for the saying of kind words and doing of kind deeds. Helplessness to be helped. Disheartened ones to be encouraged. Lost ones to be found. Though the present may be insignificant as compared with the past, "Better is a living dog than a dead lion."

USELESS REGRET.

The most useless and painful feeling is the one of regret. Repent of lost opportunities we must, and get pardon we may, but regrets weaken, dishearten, and cripple for future work. If a sea captain who once had charge of a White Star steamer across the Atlantic ocean one foggy night runs on a rock off Newfoundland, and passengers and ship perish, shall he refuse to take command of a small boat up the North river and say: "I never will go on the water again unless I can run one of the White Star line?" Shall the engineer of a lightning express, who at a station misread the telegram of a train dispatcher and went into collision, and for that has been put down to the work of engineering a freight train, say: "I never will again mount an engine unless I can run a vestibule express?" Take what you have of opportunity left. Do your best with what remains. Your shortest winter day is worth more to you than can be the longest day of a previous summer. Your opportunity now, as compared with previous opportunities, may be small as a rat terrier compared with the lion which at Matabosa, fatally wounded by the gun of David Livingstone, in its death agony leaped upon the missionary explorer, and with its jaws crushed the bone of his arm to splinters, and then rolled over and expired, but, "Better is a living dog than a dead lion."

My text also means that the condition of the most wretched man alive is better than that of the most favored sinners departed. The chance of these last is gone. Where they are they cannot make any earthly assets available. After Charlemagne was dead he was set in an ornamented sepulchre on a golden throne, and a crown was put on his cold brow, and a sceptre in his stiff hand, but that gave him no dominion in the next world. One of the most intensely interesting things I saw last winter in Egypt was Pharaoh of olden times, the very Pharaoh who oppressed the Israelites. The inscription on his sarcophagus, and the writing on his mummy bandages, prove beyond controversy that he was the Pharaoh of Bible times. All the Egyptologists and the explorations agree that it is the old scoundrel himself. Visible are the very teeth with which he gnashed against the Israelitish brickmakers. There are the sockets of the merciless eyes with which he looked upon the overburdened people of God. There is the hair that floated in the breeze off the Red Sea. There are the very lips with which he commanded them to make bricks without straw. Thousands of years afterward, when the wrappings of the mummy were unrolled, old Pharaoh lifted up his arm as if in imploration, but his skinny bones cannot again clutch his shattered sceptre. He is a dead lion. And is not any man now living, in the fact that he has opportunity of repentance and salvation, better off than any of those departed ones who, by authority or possessions or influence, were positively leonine, and yet wicked?

A CHANCE TO BE SAVED.

What a thing to congratulate you on is your life! Why, it is worth more than all the gems of the universe kindled into one precious stone. I am alive! What does that mean? Why, it means that I still have all opportunity of being saved myself and helping others to be saved. To be alive! Why, it means that I have yet another chance to correct my past mistakes and make sure work for heaven. Alive, are we? Come, let us celebrate it by new resolutions, new self examination, new consecration and a new career. The smallest and most insignificant today is worth to us more than five hundred yesterdays. Taking advantage of the present, let us get pardon for all the past and security for all the future. Where are our forgiven sins? I don't know. God don't know, either. He says: "Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

What encouragement in the text for all Christian workers! Despair of no one's salvation. While there is life there is hope. When in England a young lady asked for a class in a Sunday school, the superintendent said, "Better go out on the street and get your own class." She brought in a ragged and filthy boy. The superintendent gave him good apparel. In a few Sundays he absented himself. Inquiry discovered that in a street fight he had his decent apparel torn off. He was brought in and a second time respectably clad. After a few Sundays he again disappeared, and it was found that he was again ragged and wretched. "Then," said the teacher, "we can do nothing with him." But the superintendent fitted him up again and started him again. After a while the gospel took hold of him and his heart changed. He started for the ministry and became a foreign missionary and on heathen grounds lived, and translated the Scriptures, and preached, until among the most illustrious names of the Church on earth and in heaven is the name of glorious Robert Morrison. Go forth and save the lost, and remember however depraved, however ragged, and however filthy and undone a child is, or a man is, or a woman is, they are worth an effort. I would rather have their opportunity than any that will ever be given to those who lived in magnificent sin and splendid unrighteousness and then wrapped their gorgeous tapestry around them and without a prayer expired. "Better is a living dog than a dead lion."

THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST.

In the great day it will be found that the last shall be first. There are in the grog shops and in the haunts of iniquity today those who will yet be models of holiness and preach Christ to the people. In yonder group of young men who came here with no useful purpose, there is one who will yet live for Christ and perhaps die for Him. In a pulpit stood a stranger preaching, and he said: "The last time I was in this church was fifteen years ago, and the circumstances were peculiar. Three young men had come, expecting to disturb the service, and they had stones in their pockets which they expected to hurl at the preacher. One of the young men referred to refused to take part in the assault, and the others, in disgust at his cowardice, left the building. One of the three was hanged for forgery. Another is in prison, condemned to death for murder. I was the third, but the grace of God saved me." My hearer, give no one up. The case may seem desperate, but the grace of God likes to undertake a dead lift. I proclaim it this day to all the people—Free Grace! Living and dying, be that my theme—Free Grace! Sound it across the continent, sound it across the seas—Free Grace! Spell out these words in flowers, lift them in arches, build them in thrones, roll them in oratorios—Free Grace! That will yet Edenize the earth and people heaven with nations redeemed. Free Grace!

Salvation! Oh, the joyful sound!
'Tis pleasure to our ears,
A sovereign balm for every wound,
A cordial for our fears.

Buried in sorrow and in sin,
At death's dark door we lay;
But we arise by grace divine
To see a heavenly day.

Of Burke and Burking.

It is common to laugh at the alleged "superstition" of negroes in regard to the "night doctors," who capture and kill vagrant blacks and sell their bodies to the surgeons; and, of course, the old time masters encouraged the delusion for obvious reasons. It is also common to ridicule the fear often expressed by ruralists that the corpses of friends will be stolen. Yet there is a foundation for the latter fear, and incredible as it may appear, there have been cases of killing people for their corpses. Of this incredible and truly reckless wickedness one individual gave such horrible instances that he added a new word to the language—"Burking."

This trebly dyed villain and his associate Hare kept a cheap lodging house in Edinburgh, Scotland. Altogether they are known to have killed sixteen persons, and there was evidence that one of the corpses was in possession of Dr. Knox before the vital warmth had entirely departed. By the merest accident an intended victim, drunk and anxious to lie down, was taken to the wrong room, and found a recently strangled victim covered by straw. The horrible sight sobered him, and he escaped and gave notice. Hare, being almost an imbecile from intemperance, was allowed to turn informer, and Burke was hanged in 1828.

One such trial as that of Burke, with the inquiries and revelations which followed it, is enough to supply the popular mind with legends and horrifying superstitions for a hundred years, and it is quite likely that a scientific investigator taking up any current legend of murder for anatomical purposes might trace it back to its germ in one of the actual facts developed on that trial or in the subsequent inquiry. Now, the negroes of the south not only adopted greedily all the most horrible stories current among the whites, but they had their own traditions to draw upon. For many a year the Africans believed that their fellows were taken to foreign lands, not to toil, but to be eaten. A little later their American born descendants imagined that worn out old negroes were given to the doctors for dissection. Putting all these things and many more together, the blacks have evolved that truly blood curdling superstition about the "night doctor."

There is, they say, a black covered cart, with gummed wheels to make them noiseless, which goes its rounds in the negro sections of the city. Cart, horse and driver are all invisible in the midnight darkness; so the unwary darkey receives a fatal blow in the back, dies without a groan and is hustled into the cart, to be taken to those whose business it is to cut him up. The Indiana law is unusually severe, and Drs. Blackburn and Grant must face the lively prospect of a term in the penitentiary.—J. H. Beadle.

Pussy's Long Fast.

On Feb. 19 a live cat was dug out of a ruined building in Lynn, Mass. It is now known beyond a doubt that this animal had been confined in the ash pit of an old fashioned brick oven ever since the fire, Nov. 26, 1889. Instances of cats living without food or drink have been chronicled, but this one seems to have distanced all others. The old oven has not been used for over forty years, consequently nothing remains there for fodder. It may have been that mice and rats were confined with kitty and she made herself comfortable while they lasted. The place where the cat was confined is such that when the smoking debris fell at the time of the fire, the hottest of the ruins were only a few feet distant. The animal, when released, could only walk a few steps at a time without falling over on her side.—New York World.

Silly Sala.

George Augustus Sala, who once carried cards on which was engraved the line: "Leading literary man of England," is suing an artist who said that he (Sala) once painted a human figure with six toes on the right foot. He will probably prove that the extra crop of toes was on the left foot.—Detroit Free Press.

No Cause for Complaint.

Irate Customer—See here, I've worn these new trousers only a week and they already bag at the knees.

Dealer—Yah, dot vas recht. Does are our new padent Lenten pants vot make beopies dink our gustomers go to ghurch dree dimes effry day.—New York Weekly.