

Intelligence could please itself, or deign to be occupied only with stupendous masses, and that it holds in contempt the minute? Is it true, or does the microscope give this evidence, that nothing more than a rude or hurried finishing is bestowed upon diminutive beings? Is there sound, when we pass from the greater to the less, among organized bodies, a regular decrease of ingenuity, and of nicety of workmanship? Everyone knows that the contrary is the fact, and everyone must confess that this puny supposition of the comparative insignificance of the parts of the material system is abundantly refuted by the tints and texture of every petal that drinks the dew, and by the wing and antenna of every gnat that hums in the evening air—*Isaac Taylor.*

SIMPLICITY IN PREACHING

We remember to have met with the following passage from a sermon—we will not be so cruel as to give the reference. The preacher wanted to say that every man has a sense of deathlessness, of immortality in him. He announced his doctrine in this pleasant fashion: "The deep intuitional glance of the soul penetrating beyond the surface and sphere of the superficial and phenomenal to the remote recesses of an absolute being, adumbrates its own immortality in its progressive perceptions." And it was from the same region that we fell in with the divisions of a sermon upon a text whose awful topic ought really to have made the preacher modest, and to have imposed upon his lips the sentiment of holy ground, and a bush burning with fire. Not so, however. The text was—"God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth;" upon which the preacher said—"The text naturally divides itself into three parts—first, we have presented to us the transcendental properties of the divine nature. Second, we have the anthropomorphic relations under which those transcendental properties in the divine nature stand revealed and become apprehensible; and third, we have the appropriate symbolism by which those anthropomorphic relations and illustrations of the transcendental properties in the divine nature constitute worship." This has always struck us as a fair illustration of what may be called "the-house-that-Jack-built" style of eloquence. It has ever seemed to us amazing that there should be men able to talk after this profane fashion; yet even the use of fine words has not always been related to this thoughtless profanity; there have been men-preachers who seemed naturally to think in this odd style of speech, this bombastic phraseology. We take up a volume in which we find a preacher in the course of his sermon has to describe a tear; he speaks of it as "the small particle of the aqueous fluid which trickles from the visual organ over the lineaments of the countenance, betokening grief." And there is a story told of a Rev. John Hamilton, of South Leith, who, many long years since, was in the habit of astonishing his hearers by such marvellous words: the following, with which he introduced a sermon upon the text—"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself:"—"I shall not nibble at niceties, nor ingeminate prolixities, but with the sword of brevity shall cut the Gordian knot of obscurity, and so proceed to give you the genuine purport of this mellifluous and aromatic subject, calculated allenarly (only) for the meridian of that microcosm—man?" Perhaps our readers may say, "Too much of this;" it is still true that ignorance has frequently been delighted with these exhibitions, and certain preachers of shallow attainment have been as frequently fond of this verbal pedantry. Even great men have indulged this habit, men like Samuel Johnson, Samuel Parr, Winter Hamilton; they were all great scholars, but they could not apparently take off what must always seem to their readers to be the seven-league boots of language; they neither of them served their reputation by the practice, and each of them, and many others beside them, would have been more popular had they been more simple. Is not the highest eloquence simplicity? Try it by the most impassioned paragraphs from Chrysostom, or from Robert Hall.—*Sunday at Home.*

ANCIENT AND MODERN DENIAL OF GOD.

It is supposed that our age is so wise and advanced that a great gulf yawns between it and that in which the Bible originated, and we can no longer think its thoughts. But the idea that we are so very different from those ages is totally groundless, as the Bible

itself shews. It tells us that away in those distant times there were many distinguished men, who denied God just as our modern philosophers and their friends, who held their denial for the highest wisdom, and who looked down upon others as antiquated, ignorant, and stupid, in sore need of being rescued from their narrow-mindedness and foolishness—men who, while denying Him, lived yet according to all appearance well and happily, who were counted the wisest men of their days, and completely dominated the thought of their age. We know also from the Bible how they endeavoured to establish their denial, partly from the apparent defects and weaknesses of the opinions contrary to their own, and partly from the misfortunes and miseries of those of their contemporaries who thought and acted differently from them, and all this is set before us as plainly as if the Book were describing men of our own time who are well known to us. Our minds are also not a little supported by this consideration, which also the Bible sets before us, that such deniers of God did not appear in the times in which the old religion was the innermost power and highest pride of Israel, but only in those later times when its first pure force was broken and it had begun more keenly to feel the defects of its old economy and the incompleteness of its traditional faith. Still less does such a denial of God reach back into the earliest times of the life of man on earth, for in those there burned the intensest longing for the revelation of God and to obtain perfect certainty of His existence and nearness. But in the later centuries of antiquity a new obscuration of the human mind got the upper hand on this its highest and brightest side, and many learned schools were founded to increase and perpetuate this obscuration, yea and flourished long; so that we can rightly assert that the last centuries, those from 700 or 800 B.C., were exactly like our own time in this proneness to the denial of God and divine things. It is, therefore, a miserable delusion when more recent men of learning suppose they are the first deniers of God, and as scientific men, have just discovered the secret how we can deny God on solid grounds. But the Bible knows not only that God can be denied by men, and knows full well what sort of men they are who deny God, it also witnesses concerning two other facts which constitute the necessary contrasts to that denial, and which we must also consider in this connection. It announces to us that God on His part can withdraw Himself from men, and so estrange Himself from them that they shall scarcely find Him again in all the sorrow that comes upon them, no not when they seek Him with bitterest labour and heavy anguish; yea it acknowledges the possibility that He will deny them who deny Him. The Bible also allows that the most God-fearing and most pious man can, under very heavy and continuous trials of life, fall into the danger of denying God, exhibits before our eyes, in the most affecting and graphic pictures, a hero like Job sinking into this danger, gives us deep insight into the anguish and conflict of pious hearts torn with this despair, yea shrinks not from relating to us how Christ himself with almost His last earthly word complained that God had forsaken Him.—*Translated from Ewald's Lehre Der Bibel von Gott.*

TEMPERANCE NOTES.

HE COULD NOT REACH THE BRAKE.

There is an old story of a California stage-driver who dreamed of a journey down the mountain side under perilous conditions. In his dream he started from the top of the mountain, with a crack of his whip and a shout to his horses, and the stage rolled grandly along the gently declining road. Soon the descent became steeper, and the horses were dashing along on the full gallop, but the driver, confident of his power to check them when the necessity should come, still cracked his whip and urged them onward. The stage was now going at a fearful rate, and the passengers became affrighted; but the driver only grasped his lines more firmly, and pulled steadily upon them. At length he could no longer disregard the danger from the headlong speed at which he was driving, and he reached forward to place his foot upon the brake, when he found that it was beyond his reach! To loosen his hold upon the lines would be to give up all control over his frightened horses, and he made another and a more determined effort to reach the brake, but the brake was still beyond his reach. Faster and faster went the stage down the steep road,

and more and more frantic became the efforts of the driver to stop it; but the brake was beyond his reach! Just below there was a sudden turn in the narrow road. Upon one side was the solid wall of the mountain height; upon the other a fearful precipice. To pass that at the speed at which he was going, would be to court instant death. Once more the driver gathered all his energies together for one last frenzied effort to check the speed of the flying stage, but alas! it was of no use! He could not reach the brake! Who has not known men who were on the down grade of intemperance, and who could not reach the brake?—whose destinies were freighted with the lives of near and dear friends, whom they were bearing down to lives of misery and disgrace, but who could not reach the brake!—who saw wealth, honour, love, happiness, being left behind them in their flying descent, but who could not reach the brake!—who saw before them the yawning abyss of eternal death for themselves and their children, but still they could not reach the brake!

THE FIRST AND LAST DRAM.

Jesse Loomis was an only son. At the age of twelve he was termed by his father his mother's boy, because of his resemblance to her, as well as their mutual affection. Being naturally of a mild disposition, his mind the more easily received the wholesome advice of his mother, and his heart was the more deeply impressed with her religious thoughts. Through her influence his conscience had become extremely sensitive, and his power of discriminating between right and wrong, acute and correct. With these prominent characteristics, Jesse grew up a boy of seventeen years. It was at this age when, one afternoon, Jesse was returning home from a ride in the country with a new acquaintance somewhat further advanced in years and somewhat initiated in a few of the vices of youth. On the road was a tavern in which liquor was sold. When they had reached it John, his acquaintance, invited Jesse to drink. He was at first so overwhelmed with the thought of entering a bar-room and drinking liquor, that he at once stoutly refused. But Jesse, finding his annoying solicitations were to be stopped only by complying with them, finally consented, and entered the bar-room. His acquaintance called for brandy. Jesse, being timid and unacquainted with the many kinds of liquor, accepted the same, and poured into his glass a very small quantity. While Jesse was pouring from the decanter John perceived his hand slightly tremble, and also an uneasiness of his person and apparent absence of mind. John said nothing, but poured into his glass, with all the air of an accustomed drinker, an accustomed drinker's allowance. Both were now ready to drink. Jesse trembling brought his glass to his lips, and, as if startled, suddenly put it back on the counter, exclaiming at the same time, "John, I cannot drink it!" John looked surprised, and asked the reason. Jesse promised to tell him on the way home, which he did in these words: "John, when you asked me to drink, strange to say, home and all its associations, and the many holy recollections of my childhood came to my mind. I thought of the good advice of my mother about temperance, the thousand immoral results of tippling, as enumerated by her, and the thought of falling into them by means of my first drink. Hence the consequent destruction of my mother's hopes for me, her broken heart and lost love, shocked me. I thought of her astonishment when informed of this act, and, above all, came the question, 'What would my mother say?' Notwithstanding all these thoughts crowding into my mind, for politeness' sake I complied with your request. But, John, when I came to the act of drinking, these same thoughts came back with increased power, and stayed my hand." Reader, cherish the moral courage of Jesse. Let the same thought recall your erring feet, and the question, "What would my mother say?" be as a warning voice against the snares of vice.

We are happy to note a falling off of the consumption of intoxicating liquors last year in Great Britain, and an increase in the consumption of tea and other wholesome beverages. The amount spent in drink in 1879 was £128,000,000, while in 1878 it was £142,000,000. The most marked falling off was in beer.

THE Pope has recently undergone successfully a painful operation, and his medical advisers have advised him that to remain in Rome all the summer is, perhaps, to run an immediate risk of his life and certainly to shorten it.