

SERMONS TO VILLAGERS

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Sermons to Villagers by J. Tournay Parsons & R. W. Randal

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J. TOURNAY PARSONS & R. W. RANDAL

SERMONS TO VILLAGERS

Sermons to Villagers.

BY THE LATE REV.

J. TOURNAY PARSONS, M.A.

WITH INTRODUCTION

BY THE REV.

R. W. RANDALL, M.A.,

Vicar of All Saints', Clifton.

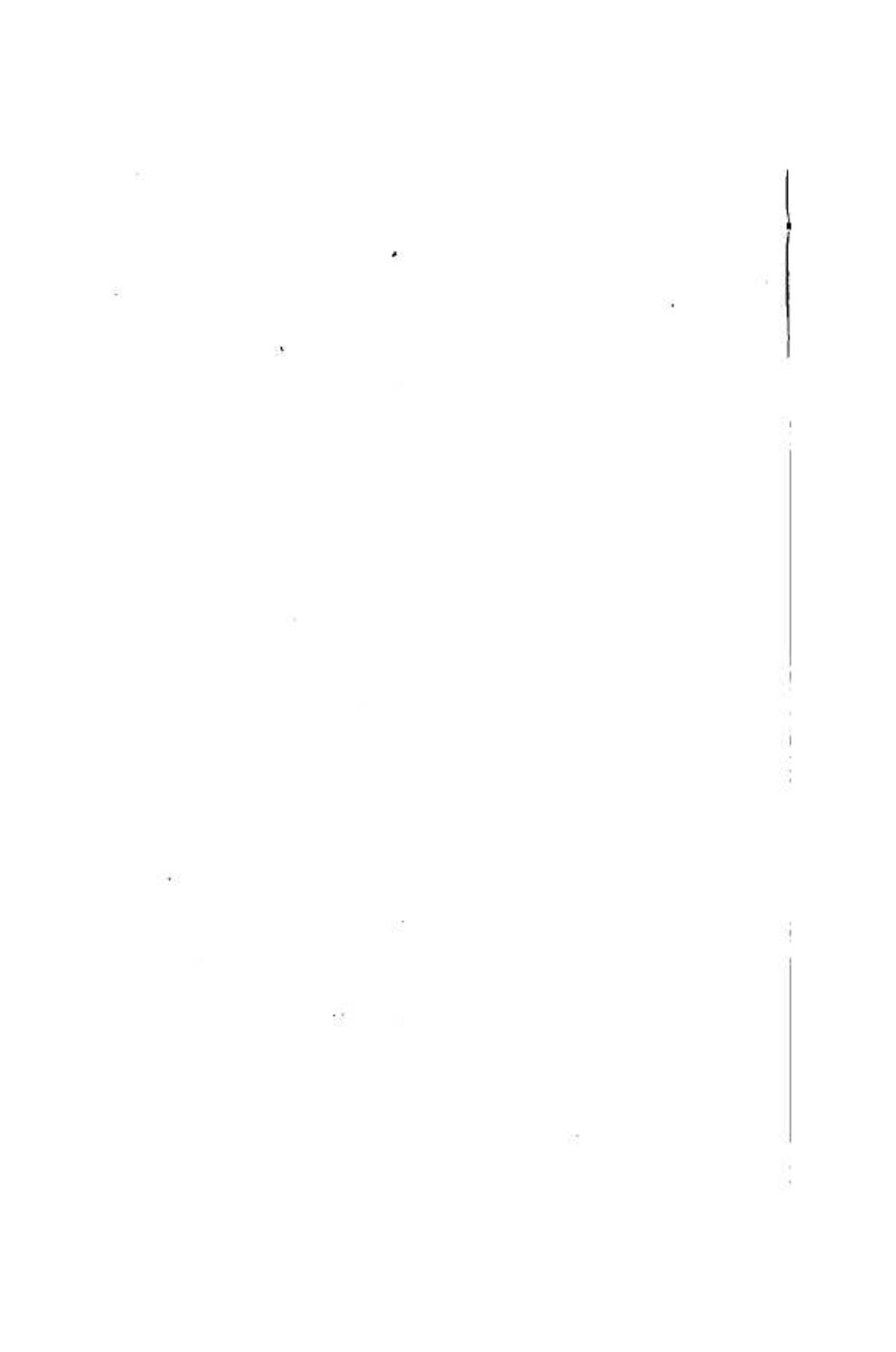


London :

SKEFFINGTON & SON, 163, PICCADILLY.

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1882

100. c c. 182.



INTRODUCTION.

I HAVE been asked to write a few words of Introduction to these Sermons. In one respect it is not an easy thing to do, for I never heard the Author preach, and the Sermons were written pre-eminently with a view to their being preached, and must lose much of their force and power when they are only read. Indeed they were preached with such telling effect, that it was commonly supposed that they were delivered without the aid of a manuscript. They were instances of what is perhaps the most useful style of preaching. They were Sermons written from the heart, and from a heart prepared and enlightened by earnest prayer, composed as if the Author was actually addressing his congregation, and then delivered as if they were spoken. In these days, when the preference is so very commonly given to unwritten

rather than to written sermons, it may be worth noticing that the author of the sermons contained in this volume is said to have delivered them with all the point, and earnestness, and power of application, to those whom he was addressing, which are supposed to belong almost exclusively to unwritten sermons. There are at least two qualities in which written sermons for the most part excel unwritten sermons, in the richer and more varied use of Holy Scripture, and in supplying practical details for the guidance of life. Any one who will take up one of the published volumes of Dr. Pusey's sermons, and notice how they are saturated with Holy Scripture, and how at the close they abound in rules and suggestions for a holy life, will see at once what may be gained by the careful writing of a sermon. Some marks at least of the same care are to be traced in the present volume, and those who knew the Preacher well, say that there was a simple earnestness in his delivery which arrested the attention of those who listened to him. I can well believe it, for though I never *heard* the writer preach, I have *seen* him preach many times. His manner, his look, his tone, his life, was a sermon, and simplicity, directness, and earnestness, marked them all. As I have read the sermons, they seem to me to be the outcome of the man. There is a striking story told of two ecclesiastics, one of whom was old, and the other young. The elder said to his younger companion, "Come, brother, let us go out and

preach." The younger obeyed the summons, and the two went out together. Up and down the streets of the town they walked. They passed through its most crowded thoroughfares, wandered through its squares, penetrated into its most obscure quarters. The younger followed, wondering when they would come to the place where they were to preach. They passed by Church after Church, and did not enter any one of them. There were many gatherings of the people in the public places, but they never once stopped to address them. At last they returned home. Silent they had gone out. Silent they came back. Then at last the younger ecclesiastic expressed his astonishment, and said, "I thought that we were going out to preach, and we have come back, and not uttered a word." "Brother!" replied his older companion, "we *have* preached. The very sight of a devout Priest is a sermon to those who see him." And so the sight of the writer of these sermons was a sermon to those who were intimate with him. There was a reality about him which seems to me to come out in what he has written. One seems to see him among his simple, country people, loving them, and loved by them, speaking out of a warm and tender heart the lessons that God had taught to him. If any one looks for great flights of eloquence in this volume, he will be disappointed; but great flights of eloquence are not the food on which simple souls can live. If anyone expects striking originality, or excite-

ment, he will find none here ; but the bane of preaching, and of religious writing, in our day, is a straining at originality. To be original in the matter and substance of our teaching, after nearly nineteen centuries of the preaching of the Gospel by the Catholic Church, is to be self-condemned. "Non nova, sed nove," is the best motto for the preacher now, as it was in S. Augustine's day. Let there be as much freshness as man can use in bringing the old truths home to the needs of our own day, but at least do not let us think that we want a new Gospel, for the old Gospel is full enough, and rich enough, aye, and even fresh enough, in itself, for every heart on earth. The old and simple truths which God has taught to His Church will be found in these pages, but those truths are put before country people in a gentle, tender way, much as a father might teach his children. It is, after all, such teaching as this which most of us need, the kindly taking of us by the hand in the midst of the difficulties, and perplexities, and sorrows, and dangers of life, and drawing us nearer to God. And all who are feeling after God will welcome the kind and loving voice which speaks from these pages. But the sermons may be especially helpful to those who live and work in country parishes. They almost realise those great words which S. Paul spoke of his own pastoral care for his flock: "we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were

willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." The spirit that prompted these words characterised the ministrations of the preacher of these sermons. He loved and understood the poor: understood them because he loved them, but also loved them because he understood them. And this little book will not have been published in vain, if it helps anyone, either Priest or layman, who has the happiness of finding his lot cast in a country parish, to minister in any way to the poor, amongst whom are often to be found some of the very truest of God's children, and who are the representatives of Him Who for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.

R. W. RANDALL.

Clifton, 1882.
