

**THE PREACHER'S
POCKET: A POCKET
OF SERMONS**

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The Preacher's Pocket: A Pocket of Sermons by S. Baring-Gould

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A PACKET OF SERMONS.

BY THE

REV. S. BARING-GOULD, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF "VILLAGE PREACHING FOR A YEAR,"

"THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING," ETC.



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PREFACE.

MY mother, with old-fashioned conscientiousness towards all with whom she had to do, was wont every Sunday evening to instruct the servants of the house severally, and to question them on the subject of the discourse they had that day heard. There was in the household a not unintelligent page, who, whenever asked about the sermon, looked distressfully up to his mistress and answered, "Please, ma'am, it was about being good." No other answer could be elicited from him on any occasion.

I am not sure that congregations always carry away with them a clearer idea of the sermon they have heard ; but the reason, perhaps, may be that

the preacher has not given them a clear idea which they can carry away.

There is, no doubt, a large mass of people who dislike ideas as much as some others dislike doctrines, and for similar reasons. Ideas stimulate thought, and they dislike the exertion of thinking. Doctrines are the tubers of the flower of Christian activity, and they dislike doing anything. Some persons are incapable of thought, and ideas therefore fly over their heads, plaintively crying for a place where they may settle down, like wild-fowl in winter. The preacher is bound to consider these infantile, flat souls, and give them that spiritual food which they can assimilate, the thinnest possible decoction of idea which is not absolute water. But in every congregation there are also persons of intelligence, with active minds, and the preacher must consider them also. These will perish on the spiritual nothingnesses on which a large body of good soft headed and hearted Christians will live and thrive. To a man of parts there is no purgatorial pain equal to that of listening to the vain labours of a man endeavouring to make a multiple

of nought. The quotient is foreseen from the beginning to be nothing, however many cyphers may be used. It was a mediæval torture to tie a man under a perpetual dribble of water ; the monotonous drip of vapid fluid drove him mad at last.

The preacher is bound to think of those who sit under him on Sunday, and who in mental powers are above the ordinary level of his humble parishioners, and occasionally to give them something which shall set them thinking. The rest can take no great harm by listening, occasionally, to what is a little past their comprehension.

In the following collection of sermons, the author has ventured to give some such material. The sermons are not of so homely a description as those in his "Village Preaching for a Year," and they are not suited for humble rustics. They appeal rather to educated minds ; but he hopes, nevertheless, that they will serve country clergy with ideas which their own experience of the wants of their people will enable them to adapt to even their humble requirements, while, as they stand, they may prove of assistance to hard-worked town clergy.