

## NOTES ON PREACHING.

Henry Labouchere, the world renowned editor of *Truth*, thus delivers himself on the subject of written versus extemporaneous discourses. However we may differ from some of his statements in this paragraph, or rather from the way in which they are put, the opinion of such a remarkably keen, clear, unbiased thinker is certainly well worth knowing. If extemporaneous preaching be the sovereign cure for the religious apathy of the day, surely it is a remedy well within the reach of the clergy.

For my own part, while I cannot go quite as far as Mr. Labouchere, I am quite prepared to admit the substantial truth of what he says in the great majority of cases. Some of the most effective preachers modern Christendom has known have undoubtedly read their sermons, notably such men as Liddon, Farrar, Chalmers, Pusey, Scott-Holland, and others.

But there was and is behind these men a tremendous personal force. As has been said, men of this class would be listened to if they sang their sermons. The man, as I remarked in some previous issue, is stronger than his sermon. We who are average men preaching to average men stand in an altogether different relationship to our people. Our personality counts for comparatively little. We are one of ourselves.

And what we say, and how we say it, will be received and judged severely on its own naked merits.

One quite frequently hear it said of some feeble extemporaneous preacher, "what a pity so and so doesn't read his sermon," and most of us take for granted that a good written sermon is always preferable to a bad extemporaneous one. But Mr. Labouchere, than whom no living man probably has a wider and profounder knowledge of the world, seems to think the opposite. According to him any kind of extemporaneous sermon is better than a written one.

This is what he says, which like everything he does say, is well and forcibly put, and worth reading.

The modern sermon is a byword—a thing openly ridiculed. Parsons are chaffed about it to their faces. For one man who can make any impression on his audience, or even hold their attention for a quarter of an hour, there are a hundred who, if they are listened to at all, are listened to only with listlessness and apathy and a scarcely concealed desire for escape. Why is this? Simply because the sermon is written and read. Not one in a thousand of such discourses is worth listening to. They are dull, commonplace, and generally verbose essays on a perfectly familiar theme; and they necessarily induce boredom. Parsons will tell you that they cannot deliver an unwritten discourse. That is generally because they never tried and have never been taught. There are few men who could not speak for ten minutes on a familiar