

Practical Papers.

SERMONS AND SERMON MAKING.

ARTICLE I.—CHOOSING A TEXT.

BY W. S. BLACKSTOCK.



HERE are thousands of hearers of sermons who feel themselves quite competent to pass judgment upon their quality and merits, who have, nevertheless, no conception of how they are produced. They would no more think of sitting down to critically enquire into the process of their production than they would think of analysing the process of the formation and preparation of the food they eat. It is with the mature result they have to do, rather than the several steps by which it has been reached. If the discourse they hear on the Sabbath is only to their liking, they are not disposed to ask what it cost, or to enquire closely into the *modus operandi* of its preparation. That is something with which the preacher alone has to do, and with which the hearer has no concern. And yet, it is probable that a little more knowledge of this kind upon the part of the hearer, would not only produce in him a profounder sympathy for his pastor, but, in some instances at least, induce him to set a higher value upon the sermon. If this article should contribute, even to the smallest extent, toward producing a better understanding between ministers and the people to whom they minister the Word of life, and toward inducing a more sympathetic and appreciative hearing of the truth, the object of the writer will be fully attained.

Very few probably of those who are in the habit of attending church, and hearing sermons, have any idea of the labour and thought which are often involved in the selection of a text, or in fixing upon the subject to be discussed on any particular occasion. Nay, that there should be the slightest difficulty experienced in a matter so simple is utterly inexplicable to thousands of even more than average intelligence. Why, say they, is not the Bible full of texts? And then as respects topics for the pulpit, is there a duty or a delight, a pain or a privilege, a sorrow or a solace, an interest or an obligation of man which is not a proper subject for discussion in the pulpit? Surely