

"such means for raising money for church purposes. However, the congregational Soiree has become an established institution in our midst, and if it is not turned to good account, if it is only made a means of raising money, and not a means of instructing the people, who is to blame? Manifestly those who address the people from the Soiree platform."

We interrupt the thread of our esteemed correspondent's remarks here, to say that it is the taste of the audience that gives the key-note to the entertainment, when men meet not to *preach* the truth, but to *please* the people. "They who live to please, must please to live." Whenever a man comes down from the platform of telling men the truth, whether they like it or not, to the platform of telling men what will please them, he is no longer a free-man, but the bond-slave of his audience, as Paul knew:—"If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

"While pulpit and pastoral duties have a first claim upon the time of our ministers, still other means of doing good, such as the press and the platform, cannot be neglected in our day, as many in the most remote districts of the backwoods, as well as in the most crowded centres of population, can only be reached by these means. The question then arises, what is the duty of the hour in the circumstances in which we are placed? Do our clerical teachers make the Soiree platform a means of educating the people? What is the character of the intellectual feast served up for the audience? One pleads Mondayishness as an excuse for not saying anything worth the hearing, another pleads unpreparedness, a third talks twaddle, a fourth retails stale anecdotes without point or humour, and generally they address themselves to please the lower instincts of our nature, instead of seeking to cultivate the tastes and elevate

"the intellectual and moral standard of their hearers."

Again we interrupt our brother to say that he is very hard on us: but "open rebuke is better than secret love: faithful are the wounds of a friend." Let him consider, however, what the fate is sometimes of those brethren who venture on a *solid* speech when the audience wants a *funny* one, and he will temper his "hearty counsel" with leniency.

"This does not, of course, hold good of all Soirees speaking, but it does of too much of it. There are many subjects outside, altogether, of those peculiar to the pulpit which are very suitable as texts for Soiree discourses, and which might be made the means of instructing as well as amusing. Not to seek far, we have, for instance, the subject of the Home and Foreign Missions of the Church, about which a very large proportion of even Church members know little or nothing. And it may be safely said that if the claims of these and kindred subjects were properly brought home to the hearts and consciences of the people, the collecting of money for the support of the Church at home and abroad would not be such up-hill work as it too often is in many places.

"However, I am no advocate for the Soiree. At least I regard it, as at present conducted, as a necessary evil, and I hope the time will soon come when the necessity for Soirees, socials, *et omnes hoc genus*, shall have passed away, when Christian liberality will be reduced to a system, and the people 'freely give' for the sake of the blessed Gospel which they have 'freely received;' but until that time does come it is the duty of the Church to turn those opportunities to the best account for advancing the intellectual, moral, and spiritual good of the people."