

preachers and exhorters at the district meetings, who must all have some word of counsel to administer which costs them pains in the production. In addition to this enormous industry in speech, there must be reckoned a still more enormous industry in hearing. Deducting sleepers and weak-minded persons incapable of attention, we are probably much under the mark in assigning an average of two hundred *bonâ-fide* listeners to each of, say, forty thousand instructors, and this gives a result of eight millions of hearers, performing sixteen millions of processes of attention every Sunday, or eight hundred millions of such processes in the year, figures which, taken in connection with the four millions of sermons already mentioned, suggest an amount of laborious exertion and painful endurance that is perfectly stupendous.

How much the nation is made wiser or better by this huge expenditure of speaking and hearing cannot be exactly ascertained. An annual examination of the sermon-hearing classes would probably determine the advance effected in knowledge, and an entire stoppage of preaching for a year—the increase or decrease of crimes and offences during that period being carefully noted—would mark the moral gain or loss; but neither of these tests is attainable, and in the absence of real information we must be content to hope the best. But whatever may be the state of the fact as to the results, it seems more than questionable whether the means are used to the best advantage. The calculations quoted above testify to the existence of an amazingly great desire for instruction and capacity of attention on the popular side. Is this made the most of by present arrangements? Is it certain that the system of tying down the popular mind to the meditation of texts from the exclusively theological point of view is the best that is possible? Might not some portion of the time be devoted to a kind of instruction which, though not technically theological, would nevertheless tend to the enlargement and elevation of popular conceptions, both in theology and morals? When the people have been well lectured in the morning, can nothing better be done with them than simply to bring them back in the afternoon and lecture them again? Or, if it be sacrilege to vary the subject of instruction, is there the same objection to an alteration in its mode? Does this endless deluge of orations tend wholly to edification? Might not a little of the tutorial element be introduced with great profit to those who are taught? The present "diet of catechising,"

where it exists, is usually a mere farce with the fun left out; but in the true conception and living execution of it, the function of the catechist is quite as important and useful as that of the homilist. Why should not the clergyman periodically test such of his parishioners as are inclined by a set of written questions on Biblical and cognate studies, to be answered in the Church—a substantial prize being given to whosoever shows clearest proof of intelligence and application. Schemes more visionary are seriously entertained and liberally subscribed for by the Church every day; and, without pressing special suggestions too pertinaciously, but looking to the undoubted national willingness to be edified on the one hand, and on the other hand to the fact that nothing more is done at present with this willingness than simply to make it the receptacle of two outbreaks of mediocre rhetoric per week, we have surely some reason to say that there are both room and necessity for amendment.

The same thought occurs when we glance from the case of the instructed to that of the instructors. Let the working classes who enjoy the weekly half-holiday, let the beneficiaries of early shop-shutting, let bankers, lawyers, schoolmasters, members of Parliament, and all men to whom Saturday brings round a season of liberty and ease, think, as they pass the pleasant time, how the same hours are spent by the forty thousand hands who are employed in the sermon-manufacture of this country. Agonising over the virgin page, dovetailing the articulations of a "skeleton," packing into the memory the pieces of pathos or exhortation that are to startle, enlighten, or console upon the morrow, burning the midnight oil or plying the midnight scissors—these are occupations of the forty thousand, while their contemporaries are walking, sporting, sight-seeing, dining. Fancy them all collected into one centre—with their families they would fill a city midway in size between Leeds and Birmingham—and imagine them all simultaneously toiling to fill each his pamphlet of foolscap with the gleanings of commentary and concordance, and some idea will be gained of the extent and nature of this department of productive industry. And looking at it in this light, does there not seem to be a very large amount of labour thrown away? If this great sermon-making community were organised with a view to the more orderly and perfect production of its staple—if we found it divided into introductioners and perorationers, fabricators of heads and clinchers of