

In those days the prayer meetings were held from house to house, and partook more of the nature of family gatherings than they could possibly do when the little one has become a strong nation. Again during the unusual religious interest of 1868-1869, the meetings were large and manifestly pervaded by a spirit of solemnity.

And lastly, the same thing is seen again in connection with the great work of grace in 1888. The influence of the revival was felt for a long time. The slow rate of declension from the high standard which then prevailed, may be justly ascribed to the form of evening service commonly known as "the song service" which with general acceptance, had been established in Bank Street Church. Still, however slow and insensible the gradation, things finally settled down to what may be regarded as the common level of church life. In this respect, the state of Bank Street was no worse—rather, in the opinion of the writer, several degrees better, than the prevalent condition elsewhere. Yet, except at the times mentioned, the great disparity between the membership of the church and the numerical strength of the prayer meetings whether rightly or wrongly, has been and is a standing occasion of complaint and discouragement.

An English statistician has told us that under ordinary circumstances only 52½ per cent of the community can reasonably be expected to be found at public worship on the Lord's day; the other 47½ per cent. of the population being incapacitated by reason of the weakness of extreme youth and the infirmities of advanced age, or engaged in works of necessity and mercy imperative upon all days alike. If this statement be even approximately correct as regards Divine service on the Sabbath, it may possibly be that 12 or 15 per cent. of the membership of the church are all that can reasonably be looked for at the mid-week service. In this case, it may be that our chronic complaints are due less to dereliction from duty than to exaggerated expectation.

But be that as it may, the fact remains that many godly people have long wrestled with the problem of how to get a larger attendance at these meetings. Many suggestions have been put forward for their improvement, and many experiments have been made, but with no permanent result. At one time the minister conducted the whole service and made it an abbreviated replica of the Sabbath service, sermon and all. This was supposed to deprive the private members of the church of an oppor-