

mediately and read the sermon with care. It had a fine devotional effect upon his mind and when he finished he felt like worshipping. As church time approached the family filed out quietly and walked leisurely to their place of worship. Of course they were in time—they always are. They sat in the same church, heard the same singing, and sermon as Mr. A.'s family. On the way home Mr. B. said to his wife. "I enjoyed the service very much to-day. The hymns were very suitable and I thought very well sung. We owe a great deal to the choir for leading the service of song. I enjoyed the reading of that chapter very much. I thought the minister rendered it with fine effect. The first prayer lifted me right up and put me in a good frame of mind for hearing. That was a real good sermon. I think our minister improves every day. What a privilege it is for our children to be connected with the church. I have enjoyed this morning service very much. I hope I shall be able to do some good work in the Sabbath school this afternoon, and no doubt we will have a good service again in the evening."

What made the difference between the estimate of Mr. A. and that of Mr. B.? Mr. B. *prepared* for worship and Mr. A. did not. And Mr. A. was prevented from making preparation, partly by the demoralizing practice which prevails all over Ontario of keeping places of business open until very near Sabbath morning.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS.

"Never go to congregational meetings. Haven't attended one for years. Can't endure such gatherings." Indeed! Why not? "Oh, congregational meetings are dry, tedious, uninteresting. They are not attractive, not entertaining, not enjoyable. Every thing about them is as dry as a lime-burner's shoe." Yes, that is just where the trouble comes in. A large number of professing Christian people won't go to any kind of meeting now unless some one takes a contract to interest them. Everything must be lively and spicy and racy and entertaining or they won't attend. The desire to be entertained is stronger than the sense of duty in such people. That is the real trouble. The good old word Duty, that once had such magical power seems to have lost its potency with these people. With them the main thing is to be entertained, pleased, interested, and unless some extraordinary means are used to interest and entertain at any given meeting, their sense of duty is not strong enough to induce them to attend. This growing desire for entertainment, accompanied as it always is by a lax sense of duty, accounts for many of the empty pews that are seen in too many churches on Sabbath. The people think there should be a fresh attempt made every Sabbath to entertain them. Of course it never

occurs to them that they have souls to save, or that it is their duty to attend the house of God. The only question asked is—would it be pleasant and entertaining to go?

Now why should any rational man expect to be entertained at a congregational meeting? Why should any one expect the reports to be spicy, and the speeches racy, and the whole meeting very lively? There have been congregational meetings that were lively enough to please anybody, but these are just the worst church meetings ever held. They make good men hang their heads with shame, injure the cause of Christ, bring religion into contempt, grieve the Holy Spirit, and wound the Saviour in the house of His professed friends. The worst ecclesiastical meetings ever held, are, as a rule, the meetings that produce great excitement. A church meeting is at its very worst when it pleases the people who love to see a fight. The people who attend simply to enjoy the fight would enjoy seeing a race between two horses, or a contest between two sluggers, or a fight between two dogs.

A meeting is being held. The spirit is good. The opening exercises are well attended. Business runs along smoothly. There is no friction and no fight. The reports are read, showing that the finances are in good shape, the work at home and abroad is prospering. The members are in good humour. The tone of the meeting is spiritual rather than ecclesiastical. At all events it is not belligerent. The best side of the individual members and of the court as a whole is seen—alas, that the other side should be so often seen in church courts!

Now what follows? That meeting is a dead failure in the estimation of several classes of people. The Bohemian reporter on the look-out for a "scene" to spread out in his columns under sensational headings, finds nothing. The ecclesiastical lawyer who hopes to make a reputation by nibbling at points of order, raising objections, and general pettifogging, who aspires to be a pettifogger, rather than a preacher, declares the meeting dull, irredeemably dull. The belligerent Christians who dropped into the gallery hoping to see a fight or a "scene" of some kind, are disgusted, and sigh for the good old days when there were annual fights over the organ question, and the hymn question, and other burning issues of that kind. They are disgusted, of course, and vote the meeting a bore. And yet it is perhaps the very best meeting ever held.

As a rule the business that makes the least excitement is the real business of the church, and when that business is most prosperous there is the least noise. Burning questions often burn the fingers of those who handle them. Too much "liveliness" too often indicates that men's passions are not under proper control and that the evil spirit has taken the place of the