

principle was lost sight of, that the congregations in England which called themselves Presbyterian fell away to Unitarian error. The Church of Scotland was in great danger of a similar fate when, under moderate rule in 1757, the practice was introduced "of ordaining young lawyers to the eldership, that they might sit in assemblies, exercise their oratorical powers, and swell the Moderate majorities;" and when it was declared, by vote of the Assembly, not essential to elders being commissioned to the Supreme Court of the Church "that they be strict in their observation of the Lord's day, and in regularly keeping up the worship of God in their families." That state of things, however, thanks to Secession and Disruption, has passed away, and the nominal standard of qualification for the office of elder is as high as ever it was.

Still, in every branch of our Church, and sometimes even within the Session of one congregation, four kinds of elders may be found. It would be well if the four could become one. The first class is represented by the careless elder. He has been elected by a careless congregation, or, at any rate, in a careless moment. He has no qualification but that, it may be, of social standing, allied to an ordinary moral character. Perhaps his virtues only appear by contrast with the defects of his fellow-worshippers, so that the reason why the choice of the congregation fell upon him is the same as that which a worthy old lady discovered for her graceless son's appointment to the office: "they were scant o' timmer when they made our John an elder." He appears at occasional Session meetings and on Communion Sabbaths in a prominent position; and, were it not for these appearances, none would know that the responsibilities of ordination vows lie upon him at all, so lightly does he bear them. He is an honorary elder, and never was expected to work, he will tell you. If his name and presence will be of any use in giving the Session a standing, he is very glad to be of service. Some congregations are grateful for this. From that gratitude he must reap his reward, for assuredly none will be his when the Chief Shepherd shall appear. Next to the careless elder comes the talking elder. He talks himself into the eldership, and, if sins of the tongue were punished as they ought to be, would long ago have talked himself out. He does nothing, absolutely nothing, but talk. He consumes his own useless time, and other people's valuable time, with silly platitudes, endless gossip, and vain repetitions. He is sent to do something, and being sought for when the task should be completed, is found talking, with the work untouched. His mind is full of plans which are never carried into effect, and which he changes almost as often as he puts off his clothes. His brethren in the eldership dread a meeting of Session or of the congregation, because he will monopolize attention, and hinder all the deliberation. He knows everybody in the congregation, and yet was never known to speak a serious word to one of these, or to gain the confidence of a single member of the church. He finds his way to Presbytery and Synod and Assembly, where he wins the same low opinions, and returns home with the proud satisfaction, if he only knew it, of having retarded the work of the court more than any other man, and of having brought a class of earnest, pious, and modest workers for Christ into disrepute among those who beheld in him a sample of them. These are drones in the hive. It is hard to say which is the worst of the two. The latter at least pretends to do something, and probably deludes himself into the belief that he is a very useful member of the church. The two remaining classes contain active men who have the interests of the church at heart, and do not spare themselves when