

small congregations, where the disaffection of one or two office-bearers may seriously weaken and painfully trouble the Church.

4. *The pride of party spirit rising among the people.*—It is astonishing how small a matter sometimes divides a congregation into hostile parties, how great a fire a little spark may kindle. The word of a gossip foolishly repeated, and as foolishly resented, may actually raise a large community into contending forces or scatter it into discontented fragments. Party spirit in a great cause has some excuse; but it is unspeakably painful to see it rage within a christian fold, on matters of small detail, or in consequence of some contemptible calumny. The great troublers of the Church are the tale-bearers. Let the minister who would have peace, show an example to all his flock, in discouraging malicious speeches, in treading down those sparks of mischief which busy bodies continually scatter, and in refusing to recognize any parties or to know any feuds within the fold of his own congregation.

So much of the frequent causes or occasions of congregational difficulty. If we enquire for a cure, we find that the one most commonly applied is the removal of the minister. It is the duty of the Church Courts to see, that this is not done in a capricious or tyrannical manner. A minister should never be sacrificed to a senseless outcry or a desire of change, or to the demands of any individual or party whatever, without cause shown. Neither ought a minister to retire from his position, in order to avoid personal annoyance, at the risk of feeling the pride of a successful agitation. But to speak generally, when the minister feels that he has no longer the confidence and love of any considerable portion of his flock, it is best that, without strife or wrangling, he should tender his resignation to the Presbytery of the bounds.

This leads to the remark, that the Presbytery, in our ecclesiastical order, forms an invaluable Court for the investigation and arrangement of local difficulties. It is the constitutional guardian, not of one class, but of all classes and parties in their just rights and liberties. At the same time, it is due to Presbyteries, that they should not be vexed by references and appeals from Kirk Sessions or individuals, until the local Court, the Session, has exhausted its powers in the case.

It must be added that no Church government, however excellent, can ward off dissension and trouble, unless the spirit of love be cherished, and the law of kindness written on the hearts of the brethren. The Churches in the Apostolic times were undoubtedly organized on the best model, yet they had no immunity from discord, and received most urgent admonitions from the Apostles to "follow after the things that make for peace." The strictures of this article might be spared, and a happy era introduced into the universal Church, if the counsel of the Apostle Paul were more generally carried into practice.—"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." √