

would not suit an assembly, of which the larger portion were now unreclaimed and unconcerned; and that discourses which might prove edifying to the one class, who could appreciate the spirit from which they proceeded, and the all importance of the truth which they contained, would only give cause for ridicule and railing to the other class.

It is when a number of men assemble together, all of like spirit and views, that such rule as that in the text may in its widest sense, the widest sense which anyone imagines it to bear, be acted on. And this, which cannot well be in our public assemblies, may be, and often is, in smaller meetings, such as our ancestors in Scotland were wont to call Fellowship Meetings, and in which, no doubt, all the members did often learn, and were often comforted by their mutual converse and communion. It is of the nature of men to meet together, and to talk together of things in which they take a deep and lively interest. This holds in Religion as it does in other things. As surely as men who are interested in the government and temporal prosperity of the earthly kingdom, of which they are subjects, talk together of its affairs; so will the men, who are subjects of Christ's spiritual kingdom, meet together, and talk together, in regard of its interests, and its advancement in themselves and others. The prophet Malachi speaks of such communion among God's true servants, and the happy consequences of it: "Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name, and they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." Of such a nature were doubtless the meetings of the primitive believers, especially in the periods of their distress and persecution. Such meetings, not under the restriction of any Church system, but in which there is free communion of mind with mind, and heart with heart, have always prevailed, wherever and whenever there has been a revival of True Religion. That small bodies of Christian people, knowing and having confidence in each other, should so meet, is in no wise inconsistent with devout and profitable attendance on the public worship of God, conducted by a regular pastor, and it is by so meeting, that, as far as speaking is concerned, believers may exert all their powers for the learning and comfort of one another.

One thing too is to be remarked. When we speak now of prophesying or preaching, the words convey to us the ideas of a large house and a large number of people, to whom one is delivering a prepared, at least a long and connected discourse. Now this was not the primitive preaching. It was not so the twelve preached, when they were sent forth in our Saviour's lifetime upon earth. They went as heralds, proclaiming the glad tidings that the kingdom of God was come, and afterwards it was stated to individuals or to multitudes, as they had opportunity. They spoke what they knew, and felt of this kingdom of God. Do you suppose that they to whom they spoke of it, and in whom there was established the faith of it, never spoke to others, as they had themselves been spoken to by the Apostles? Do you suppose that these strangers, who were at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, never spoke of the things which they had seen in Jerusalem, and the convictions which they had been led to entertain, when they returned to their own country and kindred? Do you suppose that the Ethiopian, to whom Philip preached the Gospel, and whom he baptized and sent on his way rejoicing, did not become a preacher in this sense to his countrymen, that he told them of the grace of God in Christ? And these Christians in Jerusalem, who were driven away over the world by the persecuting enemies of the Gospel, do you suppose that they could refrain, wherever they went, from speaking of their faith, and commending the great Saviour, in whom they trusted, to the souls of men? Why, in these days, when the religious convictions of

believers were strong and earnest, each man would so preach, and so prophesy; and what hinders any man, whose convictions are strong, now so to speak, as he has opportunity, to those that, if they are Christians, are only Christians in name. For such speaking, if a true man, an earnest and believing man, he needs no license, no ordination, no imposition of hands by prelate or presbytery, and he has work enough to do, and shall have noble fruit of his labours in doing it, without interfering in the least with the special vocation of the Minister, except to further and advance it. Let no man clamour for power to do more, till he has done all in his power now.

The spirit of the rule in the text, as separated from the peculiarities involved in the rule, may be easily seen and felt. It is that all in a Christian body should, according to the powers and gifts given them, seek the Christian learning and well-being of that body. Every member of a Christian Church is not only to seek his own spiritual good, but that of others also, and actively to promote it, as God enables him. God does not enable all to do that in the same way; it is with common gifts now as it was with special and miraculous gifts in the primitive age. "Are all apostles," said Paul, in reference to them? "Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" So it is now. No man in a Church can do every thing. But every man can do something if he be right-minded, and would set about it in a right way. Some could speak of the Truth; some could give wise counsel and warning; some could instruct the young; some could specially sympathize with the poor; some could form most just judgements of character; some could manage the temporal interests of the Church with most discretion; all might be doing something, and the good of the whole, and the good of each, is best promoted, when all are doing something. Then would the Church prosper, and present indeed the counterpart of the body, to which Paul compares it: "Many members, but one body; the eyes not saying to the hand, I have no need of thee—nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you."

I have just said that in a Church no man can do every thing. Now I add, certainly not the Minister. In saying this, I know I tread on delicate ground. It is a cherished privilege of a Scotch congregation, to impute whatever is wrong, whatever is deficient, whatever is imperfect, to the Minister. Why is not he such and such? Why does not he do so and so? I suppose, my friends, that there are few Ministers who might not be greatly better than they are, and do a great deal more than they do; and we can readily enough conceive a Minister, under whom it might seem less necessary for anybody else to do anything in the Church. That is a man who should be able to preach, as if he had nothing to do but preach; no visiting of the sick; no routine and ever recurring duty of baptisms, marriages, funerals; no schools to examine and superintend; no poor to attend to; no need of acquiring general knowledge; no need of relaxation. That is a man who should be found whenever any one wanted him without any one telling him that he was wanted. That is a man who should perform every one duty of a minister, as well and as constantly as if he had no other duty to perform; and withal that should be learned, and eloquent, and pious, and humble, and self-denied. Such pre-eminent capacity and qualifications are very desirable; but, if they ever exist, they are very rare. If you had a man with them all, which you will never have, there would still be a great deal which he could not do,—and with such ordinary men as must be looked for, there will be still more. In a Church all the members should be working for the general good; all should feel an interest in promoting it; all should be active in promoting it; if not by preaching, or prophesying, in some way labouring "that all may learn, and that all may be comforted." If all were so

employed, the Minister himself would be strengthened and stirred up to do more; and, unless all be so employed, whatever he does, much will remain undone. As in the natural body, when in a healthy state every member is active in its proper department, not hands alone, or the feet, but all; so it is with the Spiritual Body, the Church, in a healthy state; all are doing something, every member according to the gifts bestowed on him.

And, as all should be doing something for the general good,—so nothing for the advancement of God's kingdom in the world, and that in special connection with the Christian Church, which is an association for that end, so the duty lies very specially on some, because of their greater power and opportunities. In every congregation, large or small, in town or country, and however composed, there are some who stand forth from among the rest, and are of that congregation the "Notables," as our French neighbours would say. They may be fewer in some congregations, and more numerous in others; but some there always are in every congregation. They are so, because of wealth or acknowledged talent, or acknowledged respectability of character, or as belonging to families that have long been esteemed, or as regular in waiting on public worship, and generous in giving, as necessity requires, for the due and decent maintenance of it. These are the men, who naturally, and often officially, in one way or other, stand forth to the general apprehension when a congregation is thought of. They have great powers, for people look up to them, and are inclined to take their tone from them in regard of whatever may be proposed or done. I have seen such men, so standing out by character, station, and general respectability; I have seen them, I say, in a Presbyterian congregation exercising their powers actively for good. It was not merely that they attended Church, or helped to build a Church, and keep up the regular dispensation of Divine Ordinances in it; but that they zealously aided and co-operated in every good work, and in every religious enterprise. If there was a Sabbath school, they and members of their families taught in it. If there was a prayer meeting, they and their families attended it,—some of them assisted in it. If there could be anything done to bring people, who were careless, to attend Divine Ordinances, they were ready to make the attempt. If there was Church business to be done, they were willing to do it. Is it to be wondered that they prospered as a congregation? prospered both in the low and high sense of the word as applied to a congregation, or that, working themselves, they should have a Minister working wisely and nobly with them. Their just, natural, legitimate influence told on all, especially on the young, especially on young men on whom it had a most salutary effect. Now, suppose the state of that congregation,—I have a particular one in my mind, though it is needless to name it; suppose it reversed,—suppose that every personal effort ceased on the part of these individuals, trustees, elders, deacons, and persons likely to become such from position and general character. Suppose the Minister could not count on one of them taking the slightest charge of a Sabbath class, or countenancing even with his presence a devotional meeting—such devotional meetings being conducted with as great quietness, as great decorum as the public services on the Lord's day, and by the same person; and never taking any direct or active interest in advancing the spiritual good of the congregation; would there not be a deplorable change for the worse? Could ever any Minister's efforts make up for the change? Why, they never would make up for it, and very likely, instead of being stimulated by the necessity to increased exertion, he would be so depressed as to relax his exertion.

It is, I believe, a great error in religious teachers to accuse men of being worse than they are, or than they feel themselves to be. Men are not to be judged merely by their doing or not doing certain things, which yet it is most expedient, most useful, most honourable for them to do,—far less con-