

disorder, disentangle the perplexities of confused and contradictory motions, and stimulate fraternal harmony and prayerful unity ; or, on the other hand, may positively hinder, embarrass, obstruct, the whole proceedings. Sometimes even the voice and enunciation of a chairman, his manner, glance, attitude, may have upon the body of which he is the temporary head an unconscious influence. We have seen a whole throng of ecclesiastics run wild in debate, because, at a crisis, the chairman was flushed and embarrassed and undetermined, and waited a moment too long before decided action. So important have church courts found this matter to be, that the suggestion has more than once been made that a permanent moderator should be selected to guide their deliberations.

At this great conference one was occasionally placed in the chair who, whatever his personal character, had really no fitness for a presiding officer. Timid, hesitating, flustered, stammering, without even volume of voice or distinctness of utterance sufficient to be heard ; unacquainted with even the simplest rudimental principles of parliamentary law, such men ought not to be put into a place where they can neither do themselves credit nor help anybody else. For such positions men should be chosen not for some conspicuous service rendered to church or state, to science or art, to letters or to humanity, but pre-eminently because they are fitted to guide a deliberative body or a popular assembly. A very distinguished man was not long since nominated for such a position in this country ; but, before the vote had been taken, his awkwardness, dullness of hearing, slowness of comprehension, made evident into what a "sea of troubles" he would have plunged the assembly had he been raised to the chair. As it was, a much younger man, comparatively unknown, was made moderator, and showed no common aptitude for the place. The time has fully come when, in great deliberative bodies, the chair is no longer to be a high seat of honor to which to exalt some popular favorite or idol as a mere figurehead, but a throne of power for which the first and last and indispensable requisite shall be competency to preside and control.

II. Some serious mistakes at the conference were made by the *speakers themselves*. As not every man is fit to preside, so not every man is fit to make an address or prepare a paper for such an assembly. The more we hear of public speakers, the more we are satisfied that in the vast majority of cases, *apologies* are themselves without apology. Time is too valuable to be consumed in useless explanations, tame self-depreciation and false humility. If the apology be true, the speaker has no right to be making the address ; if untrue, he has no right to be making the apology. Yet a man will rise before a magnificent audience of intelligent and cultivated people ; and, where every moment is golden, coolly state that he has "had no time to prepare," or feels "incompetent to speak on the theme" assigned him, or in one of a thousand