

THE
CANADIAN PRESBYTER.

NOVEMBER, 1857.

TROUBLES IN THE CONGREGATION.

In penning the above title, we have no particular congregation in view. We are not ourselves in any trouble, and we make no allusion to any one locality; but we know that congregational discord is the not infrequent source of great vexation to the Church Courts, and serious hindrance to the Lord's work in the land. It may be of use to expose some of the more common causes or occasions of such discord. We do not expect to see in our generation any portion of the visible Church at rest from all troubles; and we do not wonder that religious communities like our own, enjoying much liberty of speech and action, are more frequently agitated than those denominations which submit to a despotic rule. This tax we have to pay for our freedom. At the same time we have in our ecclesiastical system unequalled advantages for the repression of disorders. Only let us be faithful to our own Church principles, and we may, with God's blessing, demonstrate to all men, that the Presbyterian constitution ensures the happy combination of order and liberty, in as high a measure as human imperfection and unwisdom permit.

Of such troubles as have vexed and disturbed congregations, within the range of our knowledge—the following have been the most obvious causes:

1. *The practical imprudence of many Ministers.*—The Minister of a Presbyterian Church is at once a preacher, a pastor, and an administrator. He cannot fail in any one of these characters without damaging his entire influence and usefulness. And as a qualification for all the three, but especially for the second and third, prudence comes next to piety. The details of pastoral duty, affecting as they do individual and family character and feeling, call for the exercise of much tact and discretion, as well as courage and fidelity. Administration of Church affairs also, the superintendence of the entire machinery of a congregation, requires prudence and patience in no ordinary degree. Yet nothing in the usual education of ministers tends to fit them for the pastoral care, or to form administrative qualities. They are instructed in the science of Theology, and are in a small measure trained to write sermons, but very generally leave