

The tendencies of the age are setting strongly in the direction of skepticism, and there are always some, in every community, ready to denounce the Christian ministry as "hirelings," who care more for the fleece than for the flock. Our well-meaning, but narrow-minded "brethren" of the Plymouth persuasion, few of whom have ever known any better type of preaching than that of some fox-hunting parson of the Church of England, re-echo the cry from the opposite quarter. And anything, therefore, that tends to weaken public confidence in the purity and honesty of the pulpit, is most earnestly to be deprecated.

It is to be confessed that ministers themselves are often to blame for this. A friend of ours was compelled, not long since, to spend an evening in the sitting-room of a public house, in the company of two clergymen, the one topic of whose conversation was—money! And the not unnatural conclusion to which he came concerning them, was—"out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." Now and then we meet with a man who seems constantly on the look out for a "call" to "a wider sphere of usefulness," a habit of mind which, whether correctly or not, is generally interpreted to a minister's disadvantage. Uncharitable people will believe that the wider sphere is not his only motive for seeking a change, and it is questionable if they are not sometimes half right.

But there is a graver evil still, of which we have to speak, and one which, we fear, is doing more than any of us is aware of, to undermine public confidence in the honesty of the ministry, viz. : the readiness with which some men contrive to change their ecclesiastical relations. We live, to be sure, in a liberal age, when happily all religious bodies are being drawn together more closely than ever, and when "broad church" schemes are in high favour. But we have no idea that christian charity requires of us the obliteration of all denominational distinctions.

When, therefore, we see a minister change his creed with the facility with which he changes his coat,—when we see a gray-headed Methodist, who has spent an average lifetime in preaching Arminianism, suddenly converted to the Confession of Faith,—when a life-long advocate of Independency, as suddenly becomes enamoured of Presbytery, and to escape some momentary difficulty, turns his back on all his dearest and most sacred associations; or, renouncing his Congregational ordination, along with "the devil and all his works," seeks confirmation and "orders" in the Church of England, all our religious sensibilities are shocked, and we are compelled to ask, are these men honest? Can these changes be the