

made use of by the Lord to keep life amongst them ; yea, the poor ignorant people of the congregation of Rotterdam (besides the more serious and knowing amongst them) bemoan his death, and their loss as of a father. And they have good reason ; for I must say he was the most faithful, feckful, compassionate, diligent, and indefatigable elder in the work of the Lord that I ever knew at home or abroad ; and as for his care, solicitude, and concernedness in the work and people of God, I may say the care of all the churches lay more upon him than upon hundreds of us ; so that the Church of God hath lost more in the removal of that man than most will suffer themselves to believe." Quiet scholarly men also have been constrained by the love of Christ and his cause to accept the position of elder, worthily conferred upon them. Such was James Wilson, of Woodville, the genial student of natural history. "To his sensitive nature," said his loving biographer, the late Dr. James Hamilton, "everything like an appearance in public was trying ; but, regarding the office of the eldership as one highly honorable and responsible, after he had undertaken it he would allow nothing to deter him from the discharge of its duties. He was an excellent elder. Shrewd and sagacious, his opinion was all the more weighty on account of the modesty with which it was stated, and his mild, conciliatory spirit made him a favorite with all his colleagues. With his tender-heartedness, he was a welcome visitor in the poor man's home and in the house of mourning ; and his accurate, methodical habits made him anxious that all things should be done decently and in order. On the eve of the communion Sabbath, he used always to visit the church, in order to satisfy himself that all its arrangements were complete, and he was extremely solicitous to ensure that outward decorum and solemnity which in his own case he found so conducive to the full impression and enjoyment of the sacred season." He exemplified in his own life what he stated as his conviction to a young friend, who was undecided as to whether he should abandon a secular calling for the work of the ministry. "Our great want in all societies at present is the absence or rarity of spiritually-minded laymen, and of these the influence is often greater than that of the clergy themselves. They mingle more easily in society and under less formal restraints, and frequently obtain more credit from the inconsiderate than the professed—I mean the professional—servants of the Saviour." The eldership has contributed to a very great extent to keep our Presbyterian Church pure in doctrine and practice. The pride of theological knowledge, the desire for popularity, the party spirit which changes the Christian into the Church-man, and, when party warfare is intestine, into the Church-lawyer, have often driven the minister into ways of thought and action that have endangered the welfare of his congregation and the Church at large. The Session, removed to a certain extent from the influences that mould the conduct of its moderator, and, viewing things from a plain Christian standpoint, acts like so many cables fast to the old anchorage of truth to bring him back to his bearings, or, at least, to save the congregation from the loss and damage which he sustains. "How is it," said an English divine to James the first, "that the Church of Scotland has never yet been troubled with heresy as we have in this country?" "I'll tell you how, man," he answered. "If it spring up in a parish, there is an eldership to take notice of it ; if it be too strong for them, the Presbytery is ready to crush it ; if the heretic prove too obstinate for them, he shall find more witty heads in the Synod ; and if he cannot be convinced then, the General Assembly, I'll warrant you, will not spare him." It was not till Independency came in, and the true Presbyterian