

men to the regions of immortal existence, and to form them to a character prepared for their everlasting possession. Justly then, may they in imitation of an apostle, magnify their office.

The respect and esteem which the apostles require for such as hold this sacred office, is of a peculiar nature.—Esteem them *very highly in love for their work's sake*. There may be reason to do so on other grounds. They may be men of deep and varied learning, of extensive knowledge, of entertaining conversation, of amiable manners, of impressive eloquence. But these qualities however estimable, the possession of them is in a large degree only accidental to the ministerial character; and they are not the qualities on which the respect of a christian people ought mainly to rest. In selecting his instruments for the conversion of men, God has often chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea and things which are not to bring to nought things that are. that no flesh should glory in his presence." And as if to humble the pride of man, ever prone to rest too much on his own power, and attainments, and to teach that success is from God alone, it has often been observed that men of the finest talents and acquirements and most distinguished reputation, have laboured without any visible success—without any addition to their churches, and have gone down to the grave without leaving a vestige of their usefulness behind them; while others in the same neighbourhood, of far meaner abilities, and little esteemed by the curious and the critical, have been honoured in bringing multitudes into Christ's fold—in giving a harmony and permanence to the congregations which they formed; and long after they have ceased from their labours, the trees of righteousness which they had been instrumental in planting, blossomed and bore fruit for the Master of the vineyard, and for the refreshment of the world. Let it not then be supposed that the esteem here claimed from a christian people for the sacred function, is founded on that mental superiority which many invested with it unquestionably possess. It rests upon a higher, a purer, and less disputable foundation—simply on this, that in the providence of God the visible church, by the sanction of its divine Head, hath solemnly set them apart, and ordained them among men for the work of the ministry. By virtue of this solemn investiture they become co-workers together with God, in the achievement of man's redemption. Whatsoever they do in their official capacity, being con-

nected with the souls of men, must be considered a work destined for immortality—they build upon the sure foundation an imperishable structure, "and they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

Connected even with the interests of a present world, there is something in the ministerial function which will naturally command the esteem of all who value the excellencies of the mind and heart as the noblest possession, and the improvement of society in knowledge and virtue as the most patriotic enterprise; and for the promotion of these alone has the christian ministry been ordained. Unhappily the records of the past teach that a priesthood calling itself christian, may be only a combination of men leagued together for the aggrandizement of their order, and for enchaining mankind in spiritual bondage; and arising from this melancholy fact, there is a prevalent suspicion of selfishness and ambition resting upon priestly confederations. But with whatever justice these suspicions may sometimes have been entertained, they know little of the spirit and design of the New Testament who imagine that it favours selfishness or ambition in those who are its teachers. It constantly inculcates that its kingdom and rewards are not of this world. The divine Author of our faith and his immediate followers neither claimed nor possessed any secular distinctions, and the uniform tenor both of precept and example in the sacred writings entirely discountenances in the followers of the apostles, all grasping after temporal gains and preferments. These indeed have sometimes fallen incidentally and unsought for upon men whom Paul and Paul's Master would not have rejected as fellow-labourers; because even when they obtained them, they were able to say with Paul, "I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel; I have fed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly, not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind." The only aim—the all-absorbing desire of a christian minister should be that those over whom the Lord has made him the overseer, may be fed with the bread of life, and be made wise unto salvation. This is the true type and model of his sacred office as held forth in the gospel. Wheresoever and whenssoever it is realized, it will present a society of men consecrated to the moral and intellectual improvement of their fellow creatures—men who, imbued themselves with the fear and love of God, and raised to competent qualifications by protracted culture and discipline for that special end, have renounced the paths of