

funds, in the election of Church officers, the care of the Churches, the appointment of ministers, and indeed even in spiritual matters of every kind. Upon this, an agitation was commenced which led to a rupture in the Conference at Leeds, in the year 1797: delegates came from all parts of the kingdom, to the number of 70, who were instructed to say, that 'the people requested a voice in the formation of their own laws, and the administration of their own property.' The preachers in the conference accordingly proceeded to discuss in order these two propositions—1. Shall delegates from the societies be admitted to the Conference? 2. Shall circuit stewards be admitted into the district meetings? Both these propositions after much debating were negatived. It was then proposed that there should be in every Conference, 'an equal number of preachers, and of delegates chosen as representatives of the people.' But the Conference rejected this also, and it seemed that although in spiritual matters which might widen the breach between the Church and themselves, they cared not to give way, yet in those matters which affected the legislative character of their own authority, the Conference was not likely to concede an iota. But what was the result? The majority, being the democratic power, rebelled. They at once forsook the Parent Society founded by Wesley, and just as he had himself foreseen and foretold; they set up a division, and being principally led by a preacher of the name of Kilham, they were called by the name of Kilhamites, but more generally to this day are known by the name of THE NEW CONNEXION. At first they had but seven preachers, seven circuits, and 5000 members, but following the doctrine and plans of Wesley in all respects save that of his Conference; and having the popular voice with them, they soon made advance, and in the year 1814 they had 23 circuits, 101 chapels, 207 societies, and 8,292 members—also 44 circuit preachers, and 229 local preachers. According to the census of 1851, they have at present 300 places of worship, and about 40,000 persons who are attached to their community.

It will be seen at once that the difference between the New Connexion Methodists, and those of the Old Connexion or John Wesley's, lay simply in the constitution of the Conference. In the former, the voice of the people is brought to bear on the legislative, as well as the executive character of the society, their conference consisting of an equal number of itinerant preachers and of lay delegates both subject to the choice of the people, whereas in the Old Connexion or first Wesleysans, the Conference consisted of none but preachers, while the people had no voice in the management of their affairs.

Both these societies continue to this day in much the same condition as we have depicted

them, and have never made any step towards reconciliation.

About ten years passed away, and then a second schism burst forth. There arose a body of persons among the Old Connexion desirous of a return to what they called the Primitive form of Methodism established and practised by John Wesley himself. They desired the tone of their public worship to be restored to something like the form in which he left it; more frequent prayer-meetings; more freedom in indulging in loud exclamations in times of worship; and other similar display of feeling; preaching by females; assemblies in the open air; and the separation of the Society into smaller devotional bands or classes according to their religious attainments. All these were certainly marks of the first Methodists under John Wesley, and it cannot be denied but that the advocates of their restoration had reason on their side. The fact was, that the Conference and its members, its tone of worship, and its meeting houses had become too aristocratic for the poorer orders. It was not John Wesley's way, they said, to confine himself to such orderly and cold methods either of worship or of preaching—let them return to the primitive habits of their great founder. Such were the opinions which gradually arose in the year 1808—but did not fully develop themselves until the year 1820; at which period the advocates of these measures were cut off from the Old Society, and were formed into a separate body of their own, under the somewhat opprobrious name of Ranters—but they gave themselves the name of Primitive Methodists. In 1838 their numbers amounted to more than 60,000. At the present time, according to the census of 1851, they have 2,039 places of worship, and 229,646 persons attached to their community.

Their discipline, if it may be so called, consists in perfect liberty. They have meeting-houses in which to worship, but their great assemblies are held in the open air, in camp-meetings, where they continue sometimes for a whole day in the most intense religious excitement, preaching and singing and praying. Quick animating tunes—loud vociferations—rapid movements of the body accompanied with gesticulations—these and other such devices of excitement produce in their meetings indescribable clamour and confusion, by which they are wrought up into similar scenes of enthusiasm to those which have been already described in the earlier scenes of Wesley's life. It may be conceived that their members are principally derived from the poorest ranks of life, and their ministers or preachers are of the most illiterate and ignorant kind; totally deficient, in most instances, both of talent and of education. The fluctuation of this society is therefore considerable—they rise and fall in number seemingly by accident, without any system of government.