

The Methodist Conference a Despotism.

"As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them." Isai. lili, 12.
"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Hosea iv. 6.

"Spiritual despotism in Methodism is a mere chimera, and no reality. Where the voluntary principle reigns the people have no cause to fear. A priest-ridden people are to be pitied; but a people-ridden priest deserves more pity!"—*The Christian Guardian*, No. 798, 19th February, 1845.

The author of the foregoing paragraph should have known, that what he was writing was partly utterly false—partly unquestionably true. He knows that the Conference of the Methodist church is an *unmitigated spiritual despotism*—altogether as irresponsible to the people as any Council of Romish Cardinals is to the subjects of their power. One man in Conference may authoritatively control, at his will, the whole of the movements of the body, and sell them like a flock of sheep to other masters—as has been done;—but the whole membership united, could not by its voice, remove that one man, or thwart any of his favorite schemes—however hostile to the people and injurious to the cause of religion. This must be so, as popular choice and ministerial responsibility form no element in the system. There is indeed a semblance of deference to the opinions of members—a semblance of power in their hands;—but it is only the liberty which the tyrant gives his slave—the liberty to dig his little garden patch—to raise and sell its little products—(the money arising from which he may at any time demand)—and to go to church on Sunday. All the play-things of committees to raise money, to be ultimately managed by the Preachers without controul—and for such like purposes—are adjusted so as to trench not in the smallest degree upon the power of Conference, nor to unnerve in the minutest function, the iron-arm of the Leaders. Did not the author of the foregoing extract insert a paragraph in the Journal of Conference, immediately after its last Session, to the effect that, *PETITIONS FROM THE PEOPLE, although not sanctioned by its rules, had in some cases been graciously tolerated!* by the Conferential Cardinals! And, is it not a fact, beyond all question,—that no meeting of members, however numerous, intelligent, and pious, is allowed even humbly to petition Conference without the consent of a Preacher—a member of that Conference presiding at such meeting? But "where the voluntary principle reigns, the people have no cause to fear," says this Solon of the *Guardian*:—doubtless this is the case—But let any man, outside of an insane Hospital, say, whether "the voluntary principle" reigns in the one case to which I have referred, and it is only one of a thousand—unless indeed he means by it, *the voluntarism of the Preachers*,—their will—in defiance of the will of the people! "*A priest-ridden people are to be pitied,*" says he:—verily, this cannot be denied!—and he is one who is guilty of the crime of riding them. But, says Solon, "*a people-ridden priest, is more to be pitied!*" That is—it is pitiable when the will of one man, or a few Preachers, authoritatively claims the submission of all the Christian congregations—but tenfold more pitiable when the will of the Christian congregations commands the respect and deference of that one man, or of a few Preachers! This is *sound Romish logic*, and the people should study it. Call "no man your Father upon earth," said Christ,—yet, the sinners in Conference—who, but a few years ago, were all Farmers and Mechanics, like other men—(and we commend them as such—for going out to preach the Gospel)—now "Lord it over God's heritage," make a prey of the people—and are addressed in public