

The Press and General Review.

THE YORK INQUISITION.

Our columns contain a full report of the disgraceful inquisitorial doings at York, perpetrated in the name of Methodism. Never was there such an exhibition of ignorance, injustice, partiality, and tyranny, as was displayed by the dominant party and their adherents. The conduct of the accused is worthy of all praise, while the ability shown puts the accusers in an undignified position. We had prepared a long article on the subject, but we withdrew it, to allow the local journals to speak through our columns. The opinion of the *Yorkshireman* and the *York Herald* will have weight throughout the country.

From the *Yorkshireman*.

"We begin to entertain the opinion that all popes, past and present, have been much abused and very ill-used individuals. Hitherto the very name of Papacy has been used as an irresistible charm to summon up sectarian wrath, and draw fire and declamation even from the lips of a fool. Who more eloquent than the Wesleyans for example, upon the alleged abominations of the Scarlet Vixen of Rome, and the iniquities of the Vatican. They have dwelt for hours upon the superstitions of the Roman faith, and shown, in flashing and imposing language, that it was the chief aim of the priests to keep both the souls and bodies of their proselytes in bondage, and to daily interfere with the every-day practical affairs of the world. One would have supposed that men who could see so well, and paint so floridly, the arrogance and ungracefulness of Papacy, would themselves have vigilantly avoided similar usurpations. But it is not so. Rome itself, even in the days of the great Leo the Tenth, never exhibited a more grasping and odious sacerdotal tyranny than the Wesleyan Conference seeks to establish in this country at the present moment. Our columns of this day present weighty evidence of this fact. We have given a copious report of the trials, before the heads of the Wesleyan Church, of four respectable citizens, for an alleged breach of discipline—that breach consisting in the grave crime of having consented, at the request of 1,500 of their brethren, to present their views at a meeting of delegates recently held in London.

"We have given the two first trials which took place at considerable length, but have thought it unnecessary that we should continue the other in so elaborate a shape. One trial, indeed (that of Mr. Coultas), shadows forth the whole question, and boldly presents every feature of the dispute between the Wesleyan laity and their spiritual dictators. It will be seen that, notwithstanding the influence, and wealth, and position of the prosecutors, they have narrowly escaped being defeated, even in a court of their own creation. The four defendants have been convicted of alleged breaches of discipline by majorities so slender, and by means so equivocal, that we think they dare not, even if they would, carry the matter any further.—Mr. Alderman Meek has for ever shattered and seriously damaged his reputation with the Wesleyan body by the course he has taken on this occasion. From some inexplicable motive or other—either from moral cowardice, or from a desire to cater to the passions of the belligerents of both parties—he made a most eloquent speech in favor of Mr. Taylor, the first party impeached contending for a reform in Conference, but lost on a division, Mr. Alderman Meek gave his adhesion to the Conference, and against Mr. Taylor. That is to say, his conscience dictated his anti-Conference speech, but his pride, or some more unworthy feeling, struggled for, and obtained, his vote. With all his liberality, the worthy alderman has a strong dash of aristocracy mingled with his feelings. He shrunk from identifying himself with what he conceived to be the spiritual democracy of the Church, and thought he had done well—exhibited almost a Roman virtue—by giving a speech against Conference and a vote for it. He may not be aware of the fact, but we can tell him that throughout the whole Wesleyan body, his extraordinary and inexplicable conduct is a theme of universal scorn and mockery. The complainants say justly that they never anticipated his adhesion to the popular side; but that having himself voluntarily and unexpectedly made a strong and unswearable case against Conference, he was bound, on every principle of honor and integrity, to have accompanied his speech with his vote. We leave the worthy alderman, however, to settle the question with his brethren, it is enough for us to have pointed out his backsliding.

"The question to be now decided is, what amount of punishment, if any, head-quarters will recommend to be inflicted upon the three parties found guilty of contumacy and breach of Wesleyan discipline? Obtained as that conviction was by such slender majorities, the prosecutors dare not, we apprehend, proceed to the extremity of expulsion. While they, then, counsel admonition and rebuke? And will the parties in question silently endure it? Or, conscious of their own integrity and excellence of purpose, will they not set the Conference at defiance, and declare that they will accept a rebuke as tantamount to expulsion, and act accordingly? Let them recollect that, if they once stoop to be admonished, they virtually abandon the position they have taken up, re-

cognize the validity of Conferential thunder, and, in effect, admit that they have infringed upon the discipline of the church of which they are members.

"The question involved in this agitation is a highly momentous one. It is as narrowly associated with the civil and religious liberties of mankind, but more especially of the Wesleyan Church, as any question which has been mooted within the last century. The struggle has now arrived at its culminating point. The laity must either conquer the Conference, or the Conference must conquer the laity. There is no middle path for either to tread. The members of the Wesleyan Church must either consent to recognize and obey the dictates of Conference in all matters and things, spiritual as well as temporal, or they must at once assert for themselves that position of mental independence, without which man is but a machine—the creature of another's will. On the other hand the Conference must lower its pretensions and ignore the tyrannical power it claims, else nothing is left for the laity but a large, almost multitudinous, secession. We confess we should be deeply grieved to see the cheering influence of so respectable and useful a body of Christians diminished by being rent in twain; but the civil and religious liberties of mankind are of too holy and grave a character to be frittered away at the nod of a few banded and intolerent ecclesiastics. It is urged that, for any purposes of legitimate and extensive reform in Conference, the laity are powerless. This is not so; all power is centred in them if they have but the courage to act with firmness and magnanimity. Let them combine in one grand national organization, and, as the first step towards victory, let them stop all supplies. Even the cheeks of Dr. Bunting and delectate Mr. Osborn would pale at this resolution. The Conference is only powerful through the purse strings of the laity. Strike at the root of this, and the question is settled: Conference would capitulate, and lay representation would be carried."

From the *York Herald*.

Let us hear no more of the tyranny of the Church of Rome, for the spiritual despotism of which it has been guilty in past times, is, to say the least, equalled by that of the Wesleyan Conference of the present day. Even in the worst periods of the history of the Romish Church, the victims of religious persecution had, at least, some amount of justice extended to them, when charged with the violation of ecclesiastical laws; whereas, in this, the nineteenth century, the authorities of the Wesleyan Church issue their arbitrary edicts against its best and most upright members, and call inquisitions into existence, for the purpose of trying and convicting these members, for offences, without any foundation whatever for so doing. There is no parallel to these iniquitous proceedings in the modern history of any religious denominations. The trials of Mr. John Taylor and Mr. John Coultas, which we have been able to publish fully and accurately, notwithstanding the determination of the "Inquisitor" that they should be carried on *privately*, have taken place.

- Without any witness being called;
Without any legal evidence being offered;
Without any properly constituted jury;
With an illegally constituted court;
And before a Conference official, who has acted in the double capacity of accuser and judge.

The constitution of this new Star-chamber is altogether contrary to Wesleyan "rules and usages," and to the general laws agreed upon by the society for managing its affairs. The law requires that when any leader is charged with any offence, he shall be tried by all his fellow-leaders. The Wesleyan "inquisitors" exclude two-thirds of the leaders from taking any part in such trials, in order thus to secure the conviction of the accused parties. The "inquisitors," however, adopt a contrary course when it is calculated to serve their own designs by allowing the whole of the ministers of the society to join in the sentence of condemnation when two-thirds of them ought to be excluded, if it was right to exclude two-thirds of the leaders. It is not denied that the members of the Albion street, Cemetery, and New street chapels from one society. The whole of the leaders, therefore, ought to have been present at the trials. If the leaders of the two former chapels were to be excluded, on what principle of justice were the ministers of these chapels allowed to be present?

It is not to be wondered at that the great body of the Wesleyans of York became infuriated by the above glaring acts of tyranny against their most respected brethren, and that they assembled in large numbers, with excited feeling, and loudly upbraided the "inquisitors" in the public streets, with their iniquitous proceedings.

The case first disposed of was that of Mr. John Taylor. This aged, peaceable, and much-respected citizen, is the oldest local preacher and leader of the York Society, which office he has creditably sustained for nearly fifty-two years. He claimed to be tried before all his fellow-leaders, and his claim was disallowed.—He, therefore, required the exclusion of the ministers, but this was not agreed to. He desired to have one of the members of the Society present, to take notes for him, during the trial, and this also was refused. He was then charged with having "attended an unconstitutional meeting, held in London, professedly as one of the delegates from the York circuit, unauthorized by any responsible party in it, in direct vi-

olation of the law of 1796 as enacted by the Conference for the preservation of the peace," &c. This charge was brought forward, accompanied by many observations from Scripture, much more applicable to the Conference party than to the Wesleyan people; and, to support it, a great number of handbills and newspapers were produced. Mr. Taylor pleaded not guilty to the charge, and required it to be proved. He declared that newspapers and handbills were not evidence; and, supposing he admitted the charge, the holding of delegate meetings was "a new thing in Methodism," as it had occurred in 1795 and 1797, when Conference conferred with the delegates, and thereby sanctioned their meetings. The "inquisitors," however, disregarded all "laws and usages," they would not even agree to the reasonable request that the trial might be postponed until after the next Conference meeting, when some concessions may be made to the people. The legal adviser of the conference party went so far as himself to protest against the reception of the accused's protest against the proceedings. And thus, without even the semblance of a trial—with a packed tribunal, the accuser acting the part of judge—Mr. Taylor was declared guilty of having violated Methodist laws, by twenty-five votes against twenty.

And how has this majority been obtained? Two-thirds of the tribunal, including a large proportion of Mr. Taylor's friends, were excluded from it. Two-thirds of the ministers, who are Mr. Taylor's opponents, and who ought not to have been present, were allowed to vote against him. A supernumerary, an opponent of Mr. Taylor's, who had no right to be present, was allowed to swell the majority; and Mr. Hurstwood and Mr. Monkhouse, both friends to Mr. Taylor, and against whom similar charges were pending, were excluded from the court, in defiance of that principle universally acknowledged in England, that every man shall be deemed innocent, until he has been proved guilty. It is by a majority thus shamefully constituted that the Conference party attempt to brand the character of an aged, a strictly upright, and a most consistent Christian, with the offence of sowing disturbance and dissension in the society. The meeting of delegates, as we have shown, was to promote peace; it appointed a committee to wait upon the Grand Inquisitor at the Mission-house for this object, when he declared "war to the knife." The delegates and their constituents are clearly the peace party; the "inquisitors," by their tyranny, are the real promoters of dissension and division.

Mr. John Coultas, a highly respectable citizen and local preacher, was the next party cited to appear in the Wesleyan star chamber, for the odious offence of attending the meeting in London, to promote reforms essentially necessary, and to restore peace to the society. Mr. Coultas's trial took place under similar circumstances to those which we have narrated, and he was found guilty by a majority of fifteen against twelve.

Mr. Coultas objected to two of the tribunal on personal grounds, and we are informed that they both recorded their votes against him. One gentleman, also, was brought from a distance to vote with the conference party, so that they having nothing to boast of in their majority, and may be said to have been virtually defeated in their object. The twelve honest and fearless supporters of Mr. Coultas were nobly led by Mr. Meek, Jr. and the balance of argument and talent was altogether on their side, independent of the justice of the case.

Neither time nor space will allow us to dwell on the case of Mr. Monkhouse and Mr. Hurstwood. The charge against the former, after some altercation, was withdrawn, although he wished it to go on. In the case of Mr. Hurstwood there was a large majority against him.

It would be an insult to the common sense of our readers generally, were we to suppose that they look upon these trials with any other feelings than those of sorrow, disgust, and indignation. Nevertheless, we feel it our duty to give the fullest exposure to them, and to hold them up, not for public reprobation merely, but because we feel that publicity through the press is the best means of exhibiting their hideous deformity, and of preventing their repetition.

We hesitate not to say, that there is no other religious community in the Christian world in which such daring acts of despotism as those we have described would even be attempted, far less accomplished. All for what? Because the accused parties have adopted a certain course sanctioned by the Wesleyan society in past times, in order to bring about the peaceful removal of knowledge and glaring existing abuses. The Wesleyan Pope, and the junta of Wesleyan cardinals at the Mission-house in London, issue their arbitrary edicts, right and left, against those who are deemed hostile to their unjustifiable official proceedings, and their emissaries in the country appear to think that their sole duty is to obtain a verdict against the suspected or feared members, by whatever means, and at whatever sacrifice of principle. And any Wesleyan venturing to call in question the justice of such proceedings, may consider himself as a marked man, the "inquisitors," apparently, being determined to suppress every honest expression of opinion, when opposed to their arbitrary rule.

The proceedings in York are an unjustifiable

outrage, not only against the respected citizens, whom the Conference have dared to insult, by the formalities of pretended trials, but the outrage extends to the whole of the 1,500 Wesleyans, who, in the spirit of conciliation, deputed them to the meeting in London as messengers of peace.

We need not mention the name of one preacher, who has shown anything but a Christian spirit, nor is it requisite that we should allude to one person who, on the trial of Mr. Coultas, attempted to pervert his observations.

Will the Wesleyan body allow such an extreme ecclesiastical despotism as this to continue in existence, stifling the springs of Christian charity, and retarding the progress of Christian truth, in these days of intelligence and religious liberty? We cannot believe it. If they do not cordially and unanimously associate together, in their numbers and in their might, to overturn this monster iniquity, this priestly incubus on their society, they will continue to be held, and deservedly so, in the temporal and spiritual bondage of the Conferential "inquisitors"—a bondage, as tyrannical as it is anti-Christian.

For their consolation we may remark that persecution, more or less, has always been connected with the success of very good cause; so that, by nobly bearing with it while it is inevitable, and taking every lawful means of suppressing it, they are sure ultimately to accomplish their emancipation from its thralldom. And we trust they will never rest satisfied until the constitution of the Conference has been thoroughly re-modeled so as to render further inquisitorial tyranny impossible, and to place the future peace and welfare of their denomination upon a firm and lasting foundation.

CLERGY RESERVES.

From the *Church*.

The debate on Mr. Price's resolutions was brought to a close at a late hour on Friday night, or rather on Saturday morning. Protracted as the debate has been, it has been animated and interesting in the extreme; and has elicited some display of eloquence which would do credit to any senate in any country. The issue of the struggle we consider almost tantamount to a defeat on the part of the movers, for although the whole set of resolutions have, in parliamentary language, been carried, yet the result can never be adduced as representing the united opinion, or anything like a unanimous wish of the Legislative House of Assembly of this Province; consequently the proceedings here will be devoid of all weight in the eyes of the Legislature at home; or at any rate of the weight which would necessarily attach to an address from the Province, if it spoke the general sentiments of the Assembly or people. The first twenty-three Resolutions were allowed to pass without a division, as being a mere relation of circumstances connected with the history of the Reserves. The twenty-fifth declaring that the present disposition of the Revenue is unjust, met with a decided, though ineffectual opposition; but the twenty-ninth which contained the pith of the question, namely that the Provincial Legislature should be invested with the power of alienating the Reserves entirely from religious purposes, was carried only by a majority of two. There yet remains to be adopted an address to the Queen founded upon these Resolutions, but we maintain that no address embodying their sentiments can ever be received or looked upon as "the opinion of the House," when the division have shown that there existed a great difference of opinion, and very strong opposition to the measure, though it has been introduced and borne up with all the influence of a popular ministry.

The carrying these Resolutions is a very different matter from the passing a bill. In the latter case, the merest majority is enough to make it a law; some such rule being necessary for the practical working of Legislation. But when an address is presented to the Imperial Government, stating that such and such are the sentiments and the wishes of the Legislature of Canada, that in the opinion of the House of Assembly here, it would be expedient and desirable that the Government there should revise and repeal certain important laws of its own enacting, then the authorities addressed must necessarily inquire into everything connected with the alleged opinion: is it the opinion of the whole House, or of only one half of it, is it the opinion of the whole House, or of only one-half of it, is it the consistent act of our Legislation, or is it a mere party vote, obtained by party influence, and contrary to the opinion of a large and respectable section of the Assembly? When all these are considered, as we are confident they will be, it can hardly be expected that the Imperial Government will adopt the views set forth in these Resolutions and the address, and in withholding its concurrence it will be only interposing its supreme authority in the very way in which it can best be exercised, namely, as a check upon the evils and injustice of Partisan Legislation.

The following analysis of the division has been prepared with some care, and may be depended upon as correct in the main.—

Table with 2 columns: Category and Yea. Nays.
Ministers, 7 1
Ministerialists, 27 12
Anti-Ministerialists, 2 21
Total: 36 34