

The answer is easy. At the Hallowell Conference, held in August, 1832, a Committee was appointed to consider certain communications between the Wesleyan Missionary Committee in London and the Board of the Canadian Missionary Society. That Committee presented its Report on the 11th of August. Among other recommendations, it contained the following:—"That Episcopacy be relinquished, (unless it will jeopard our Church property, or as soon as it can be legally secured,) and superseded by an Annual Presidency." In regard to this recommendation, the Annual Conference passed as follows:—"Resolved—That this Conference recommend the General Conference to pass the 3rd Resolution of the Report of the Committee on the proposed Union, which Resolution reads as follows:—'That Episcopacy be relinquished, (unless it will jeopard our Church property, or as soon as it can be legally secured,) and superseded by an Annual Presidency.'" The action of the General Conference in the premises may be perceived in the following note in the Minutes of the Hallowell Conference, by the Secretary, Rev. James Richardson, now Bishop of the M. E. Church:—

"The above resolution to relinquish Episcopacy, was recommended to the consideration of the General Conference, by three-fourths of the Annual Conference, and *duly concurred in by the General Conference*, as is by the Discipline in such cases required."

Let us examine, a little farther, the allegation, so oft repeated, that the Union was an unconstitutional measure. It has been said, that the Union was exclusively the act of the Conference, and that the Conference is not the Church. True, the Conference is not the Church, but it is the only authority known to Methodism possessing power to legislate for the whole Connexion.* By the very constitution of Methodism, the Conference alone can enact rules binding upon the whole Church. No one ever imagined that the Conference exceeded its constitutional powers when it sought and obtained separation from the jurisdiction of the American General Conference; nor did it exceed those powers when it sought and obtained union with the Conference in England. *The same authority ratified both arrangements.* A late writer has said, that "separation from the United States was constitutional, having the consent of both clergy and laity." But what are we to understand by "constitutional?" The only constitution, apart from the New Testament, recognized by Methodism, is its Book of Discipline, and according to *that* the Conference is the only authority that can legislate for the whole body. Moreover, the inference from the above quotation,—that the union had not the consent of the laity,—is untrue. Quite as many were opposed to separation from the American Conference in 1828, as were afterwards opposed to union with the

* "Strictly speaking, there is no *Legislation* in the Methodist Church. . . . The Church is a voluntary association, and to the utmost extent to which anything like *legislation* obtains in it, is the adoption of prudential regulations, not contrary to the Word of God, for the guidance of those who voluntarily join the Church, and voluntarily remain in it. It is only, therefore, in an accommodated and very limited sense, that the term *legislative* is employed to distinguish any body in the Methodist Church." So far as that Church is concerned, "the power of legislation, in this modified sense, has been, from the beginning, invested solely in the Conference of Ministers."