

# THE DESERET WEEKLY.

Truth and Liberty.

No. 4.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, JANUARY 12, 1894.

Vol. L.

## PERFECTION AND OBEDIENCE.

*Discourse delivered in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, September 2nd, 1894, (Salt Lake Stake Conference), by*

ELDER ABRAHAM H. CANNON.

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I have been greatly interested, as all who are present doubtless have, with the report given by Brother Evan Stephens of the choir and its labors. One item he mentions should be particularly impressed upon the Latter-day Saints. You are all familiar with the remarkable acoustic properties of this building, and the shuffling of feet or the moving about of people in any part of this structure creates quite a disturbance. We should always be careful to make as little noise as possible in this tabernacle after the services have commenced. It is a mark of great disrespect in houses of worship for the congregation to be moving about, or, except in cases of necessity, for them to leave until the services are closed. I suppose there are no Latter-day Saints who have attended our services but have enjoyed beyond the power of expression the singing of our choir. I believe it is one great motive power that has increased the attendance of young people at our services, and I for one feel to give them very much credit for the entertainment they have given us by their singing and for the spirit which their sweet voices, accompanied by the tones of the organ, have inspired in our hearts. I believe that the song of praise is indeed pleasing unto God; and I do not believe that there is a man or woman living whose heart is moved by the sweet tones of music, but has some tender chord which can be touched by the Master Hand and be made to work in unison with some measure at least of the Spirit of God. We say that, "Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast," and instances without number might be related of the power of music even upon wild animals. There is something which God has planted in the human soul that savors of divinity, and I often think that music is the power which touches the inward spring or inspiration that God has planted in the human heart. I always feel joyful in listening to that which is given by our singers. And when we think that those are mostly children who have been raised in these mountains; that their teacher is one who a few years ago was laboring on a railroad, his talent undeveloped and unknown, we must feel that they have

not alone depended upon their own efforts, but that the Spirit of God, which giveth intelligence and strength, has rested in great abundance upon our choir. I believe that the Lord will bless them for their faithfulness in attendance at services and for the diligence that they have manifested in their practices. I do hope, however, that the choir—and the same wish may be extended to the Latter-day Saints in all their labors—will not be satisfied with that which they have already done. It was certainly a great thing—something marvelous when we consider the circumstances—that our choir should go to Chicago and compete so successfully with those trained voices from the British Isles and from various parts of the world that had gathered there for the purpose of taking part in the Eistedfod, as it is called; and I have heard many people from the East testify that though our choir received only the second prize, it was certainly entitled to receive the first. But I do not think for one moment—and I hope that the members of the choir do not—that they have reached perfection. There is abundance of room for them still to develop, and I would like to see them continue in their efforts, and to be discouraged occasionally if necessary, in order to spur them onward to greater diligence and make them more anxious to attain perfection, so far as perfection is possible to human beings. I remember reading an incident of Samuel F. B. Morse, the discoverer of the power of electricity. He was at one time an art student in London, and was studying under the renowned Benjamin West. He desired to present his master with a picture, and he took special pains for several weeks to complete the drawing which he intended to present. After he had finished it, he took it to his master and handed it to him, and asked him to accept it. The master looked at it, praised its beauties, and pointed out where Morse had done excellent work, but finally handed it back to him and said, "But you want to finish it." Morse was a little downcast at this remark, but took the picture and again worked on it, correcting some deficiencies which had been pointed out by the master. Again he brought it to him, and Mr. West again praised the further progress of the student; "but," he says, "you want to take it back and finish it." Morse did so, and the third time presented it to Mr. West; but Mr. West, after pointing out some errors, told him again to take the picture and finish it. "But," says Morse, "I have finished it." Then the master showed him where there were certain defects in his drawing, and gave him this advice: "The finishing of one picture makes the artist, and not the drawing of many pictures." It is the

finishing work of this choir, individually and collectively, that makes perfection; it is not the learning of so many pieces in a half-hearted way. It is the finishing, and thorough and complete learning, that makes the artist in any occupation. And this should be the aim of every Latter-day Saint, whatever his calling may be. He should not be content with asking, "will this do?" but "Is this the best that can be done?" Nothing short of this should content any person in the Church.

We say we have perfection in the Gospel, and we are seeking to follow the advice of the Savior when He said to His disciples, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." We have heard today that He gives no command to His children which is impossible of fulfillment, and we can only labor with the powers that God has given unto us, and perform to the best of our ability the duties required of us today; and then tomorrow there will be another step in advance for us to take. By this gradual progression, under the blessing of God, we can reach that perfection which Christ admonished His disciples to attain. But as it is today, even among the people of God, where do you find a man that is at the head of his profession and of his labor? Very few indeed there are among the people. Hunt among this people for men to do ordinary work, and how many of them are there that can be trusted? Many will do their work if they have an overseer to direct their labors; but leave them alone and they will neglect it or do it in a slipshod manner. Take any of these men who have large numbers of workmen under their care, and how many do they find among these hundreds whom they employ to whom they can entrust work with the full assurance that it will be done thoroughly and without loss of time? Very few indeed. It is illustrated in the incident told of two boys who were working in a chair factory. There were a number of others employed, and the master paid them by the piece, and every Saturday night they brought their work to him and received credit at so much per piece. But after awhile, he desired a foreman, and in order to test his workmen, he told them that hereafter they could receive credit for their work without having it tried to see if it was thorough; they could just report themselves how many chairs they had finished and credit would be given them. He found that at the end of the first week there was a great deal more work reported to the man who had charge of the books, and for two or three weeks the number of chairs daily increased. At the beginning of the third week he began to examine this work that had