

the cabinet ministers get down on their knees and talk through it at her. She is said to look much like the ordinary Chinese woman, and I have a picture which looks, I am told, much like her. It represents a tall Chinese woman with a crown on her head and with a gorgeous silk gown decorated with embroidery covering her person. She sits as straight as a poker, and looks a though she might be able to rule. The real photographs of the empress dowager, the Emperor of China, and of the empress have never been taken, and if they were they would not be allowed to go outside of the palace.

One of the biggest magazines of the country recently published pictures which it labeled as those of the emperor and empress. Any one who has even a slight acquaintance with China, knows that the obtaining of real photographs of this kind is absolutely impossible, and I am surprised that the editors should have been so easily deceived.

Frank G. Carpenter

### CONFERENCE INFLUENCES.

Conference has passed away with its predecessors in somewhat of a mechanical way, as many would assume, particularly since the railroads bring and return from all points, visitors to the great occasion.

Compared with old times, when travel was slow and tedious and roads dusty or muddy, there has been much of a change; but many came then who do not come now; the ox team or even the horse is voted slow, and many remain at home, probably among these some of the most impressionable and devoted of the people, and now advanced in years. They care not for the trouble of a team, camping out, etc.; so they have to get the enjoyable inspiration of years gone by somewhat at second hand.

Most of officials come as a matter of course, and many no doubt reproduce the thoughts, suggestions, counsels and revelations that are given with great faithfulness and fidelity; others do not possess the faculty of retaining or of re-presenting that which is heard or learned, and only in a very general and fragmentary way can many settlements get the unction and spirit of this great gathering of authority.

Yet the main interest of Conference is educational; corrective, suggestive, expounding and developing truths long known yet like all divine things ever evolving new phases, features, ideas, light, as the exigencies of progress and growth may demand. Topics presented pass through quite a diversity of mentality in the speakers, who are mainly of the Presidency and the Twelve, so that if consideration has been given whatever may be prominent or first foremost, and it has been in some sense, exhausted, many sides at least, have been presented. In this sense also there is a general "sowing of the seed," and finite man probably can never tell where, when or how that may germinate and bring forth fruit. The average Latter-day Saint is wonderfully receptive when a truth or a true principle is enumerated; but all soil is not quick in action, all seasons are not favorable, and after all, ideas long pondered

upon, lines of action, matured after lapse of time, are each more likely to be permanent and enduring than when created under momentary impulse by the magnetism of language or even the fecundity of inspiration felt at a given time and place. Men can be moved upon by enthusiasm, by the contagion of a multitude, by the influences around and by a generosity of soul which, in moments of exaltation, sees no obstacle and knows no sacrifice until it comes to practical experience. Then, and not till then, does "sober second thought" assert itself, and it is found while "the spirit was (and is) within, the flesh is weak."

Some are critical because so little that is new invites the attention of the Conference visitor. But this is the thought mainly of those who enjoy continually "the droppings of the sanctuary." To them the food may have an every-day kind of taste about it. But the visitor is not so much surfeited. To him or her it is "a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined." The first is somewhat capricious; the latter is hungry. The first wants the trimmings, the elegancies, the rhetorical eloquence of the well-trained speaker; the latter simply asks something a little different from what he has at home, where variety is none too abundant, and even the expressions of some local brethren are as "a thrice-told tale."

The inference is not unfair that the intellectual friction of headquarters and surroundings should develop a broader mentality than does the little hamlet or country town; and this thought lays, no doubt, at the base of missionary appointment in Stakes; but it also underlies the institution of annual and semi-annual conferences, for the presiding authorities cannot personally visit all the Stakes of Zion, to say nothing of the host of localities less significant.

An attempt is made to generally recognize the entire people, by holding Stake conferences where members of the Twelve and others visit, and to such points the people congregate in part. But there are probably thousands, may be tens of thousands, in Utah who never saw or heard President Woodruff or his counselors. Here and there a prominent representative is seen and heard, but the general culture, the enlargement of the spirituality of the masses, waits in part upon the spirit as poured out in the great general gatherings called Conference. That a great wave of life and power passes over all the faithful, whether at home or abroad, from this central point at such times, is a fundamental idea in spiritual science; but greater probably than that, is where representative men can return transfused with the spirit of Conference—not the letter only, not the word alone, but that more intense inspiration which, reaching out, sees a thousand collateral ideas which, enshrined in the word, are made manifest through the essential life-giving force, if the word has come with power.

Nor need we assume that this fire, this educationally progressive spirit, is confined even to the word uttered. It is felt in the prayer as it is wafted upward and sealed by an amen. It is enjoyed in the singing and the music,

which carries with it power—a power which subdues, refines, expands, ennobles and dispels the worry and care, the anxiety of life, its fretting interests, just as effectually as the evil spirit was exorcised by music from the disturbed and stricken Saul.

Humanity, unenlightened, unmoved upon by that sublime spirit, is yet pushed forward by illustration, by comparison, by example. Still more so is the one influenced by a loftier spirit. He feels the beauty of order, the grandeur of surroundings, the voice of authority, the inspiration of the heavens. He returns to his family, his home, his settlement, his charge, with a desire to improve, to lead out, to create those harmonies which are the soul and fitness of things. So there comes a higher tone into life, a fuller consecration, grander thoughts and aspirations, which mould slowly, gradually, but surely, the extremities of our Zion: that all the culture and soul may not glorify the head or heart alone, but that these extremities and even individual members of the grand body may be assimilated in beauty, and excellence, and order, and life, to the center of Priesthood, and privilege, and blessing for ever and ever.

There never was a more hopeful time for Zion. Prognostication, moving on the same lines as that of the ancient Prophets, can hardly say more than they did. But the half has not been told yet of that glory which already breaks from the womb of time of that dispensation which is charged with the culmination of the designs of the Father, and towards which countless worlds of glorified intelligences are looking as to the consummation of all things and the fruition of earth's faithful children in the program of the gods.

Nor can the dividing line be marked between the spiritual and the temporal. In the one is involved the other. "The Gospel of the kingdom" and true civilization are synonymous terms, for the power of the former penetrates the latter. It removes the curse from labor, it redeems the earth, it fosters invention, it utilizes science, it prompts to discovery, it is the parent of order, beauty, propriety, reverence and peace; it inspires faith, hope and charity; it is the friend of all, ennobling the humblest, comforting the forsaken and broken hearted. All evil will flee from before its beneficent spirit; all rivalry save as to well doing will be destroyed; all poverty, all crime, all disease, will know of its beneficence. It is the manifestation of Christ—of salvation to a waiting world, and by it revolution will come into social life, industrial life, moral life, and political life; for it is the science of life, revealed by the Author of life, and instituted, foreordained to ultimate triumph and success. This is not rhapsody; it is not enthusiasm. The beginning may have been weak, it progress slow, its future disputed, but "truth is mighty and will prevail." The "little stone," the "piece of leaven," the "mustard seed," were emblems selected of Divine wisdom. The first "filled the whole earth," the second "leavened the whole lump," the third grew until "the fowls of heaven lodged in the branches thereof." So Conferences, Stake or general; Priesthood, local