

GENERAL CONFERENCE.

The Sixty-seventh Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, at 10 a. m. on Sunday, April 4, 1897. President George Q. Cannon presiding, President Winford Woodruff being absent on account of sickness. Elder Brigham Young of the Quorum of the Twelve, was not present for the same reason.

Of the general authorities present on the stand there were of the First Presidency—George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith; of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—Lorenzo Snow, Franklin D. Richards, Francis M. Lyman, John Henry Smith, George Teasdale, Heber J. Grant, John W. Taylor, Marriner W. Merrill and Anton H. Lund; Patriarch John Smith; of the First Seven Presidents of Seventies—Seymour B. Young, C. D. Fjelsted, B. H. Roberts and George Reynolds; of the Presiding Bishopric—Wm. B. Preston, Robert T. Burton and John R. Winder.

The first meeting of Conference was largely attended, many of the people being compelled to stand during the service.

Conference was called to order by President George Q. Cannon.

The choir and congregation sang the hymn which begins:

Our God, we raise to Thee
Thanks for thy blessings free,
We here enjoy.

Opening prayer by Elder John D. T. McAllister.

The choir sang:

Softly beams the Sacred dawning
Of the great millennial morn.

PRESIDENT GEO. Q. CANNON

said, "President Woodruff desired me to bear his love to the Conference. He has been indisposed for a few days, but is much better, though scarcely strong enough to come to meeting this morning. He hopes, however, to be with us at some time during the Conference. In order that there may be no concern relating to his health, I wish to say that he is much better than he has been. He is somewhat weak, but feeling very well otherwise. He has been troubled for some little time back, with insomnia, that is, sleeplessness, and this has worn on him, but he has been sleeping very well for the last two or three days and nights. I thought that this announcement to the Conference would satisfy the inquiries of a good many who have heard that he was not well.

The speaker then directed the attention of the general assembly to the prosperous condition of the work of the Lord, indicating that He was looking upon His people with favor. Reports from all parts of the world showed unusual success resulting from the efforts of the Elders abroad. Eleven hundred souls had been added to the Church in the Southern States alone. In that field it was expected that by the end of the present year the number of Sunday schools organized would reach 150. Elder Elias S. Kimball presides there. In the Eastern and Middle States prospects were flattering, this being the report brought by Elder Samuel W. Richards, who had presided there for over two years. He had been succeeded in that position by

Elder Alonzo Kesler. Brother Kelob presided in the Northwestern States. He was located and laboring in Chicago. Much good was being done, and new openings being made for the spread of the Gospel in that section. Elder Nye had charge of the Californian mission. A most encouraging feature of present missionary labors was the increase of faith among the Elders, indicated by many of them traveling without purse and scrip. They had been greatly blessed in complying with this requirement; their wants had been supplied, the Lord having operated upon the people, opening their hearts to receive the servants of God. Even in Great Britain, and on the continent of Europe numbers of Elders were trying to travel in this way, although it was difficult to do this completely on account of the fear existing in relation to nihilism and socialism; men without money were liable to be arrested and imprisoned. In Europe the work was prospering, especially in northern Sweden, and in Holland, Elder Spencer who recently returned from the latter country gave a most flattering account of the results following the preaching of the Gospel there. In Germany the missionaries were being given larger liberty than heretofore, and some men of prominence were inclined to investigate the Gospel. For the present the Elders had, owing to the Armenian difficulties, been withdrawn from Turkey, and in work there left to the management of local Saints. An encouraging aspect was presented by the Polynesian Islands, and indeed the whole situation of the work abroad was prosperous. God had wrought a wonderful change upon the minds of the peoples of the earth. The deadly hatred toward the Saints which had existed at times had disappeared. Thirteen hundred Elders were in the field and calls for more laborers were coming from every direction. Altogether the work of the Lord was never more prosperous than now. President Cannon directed attention to the fact that a mighty field had scarcely been touched—the peoples of the southern portion of this continent, where there were millions of Lamanites to whom the Gospel had yet to be carried. The speaker then mentioned the fact that operations were in progress in fields nearer home. Elders Edward Stevenson and Matthias F. Cowley had visited the north, Idaho and Montana, where they had been warmly received, and their efforts attended with success. The same could be said in relation to recent labors in Idaho by Elders Jonathan G. Kimball and Henry W. Nelsbitt, while Elder John W. Taylor, of the quorum of the Twelve had opened up a mission in Colorado.

Reference was made by the speaker to a recent probability of division in the Church at home, on account of erroneous doctrine having been promulgated and false statements made. A revelation had set in, however. Reports from all the Stakes were to the effect that those who had been misled were having their minds enlightened. All signs indicated that the Saints were growing in an understanding of the duties of the Priesthood. God had sustained His servants and people in

every dark hour and would continue to do so.

President Cannon briefly reviewed the condition of the various auxiliary organizations of the Church—notably the Young Men's and Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement associations. He mentioned that the Sunday school membership had increased nearly 6,000 during the past year, and the total of officers and members was now about 105,000. There had been a considerable increase in the membership of the children's Primary associations, the report showing an enrollment of 33,600, besides 2,770 officers, and if every Stake had reported the probable aggregate would be shown to be about 38,000. There had also been a gratifying increase of religion classes, the object of which was to provide religious instruction for children of the Saints who attended the public schools.

At the close of President Cannon's discourse Sister Mable Cooper sang: "Unto Thee, O Lord, Will I Lift my Soul."

PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH

was the next speaker. He referred with gratification to the preaching of the Gospel without purse or scrip, credit for this condition being due in great measure, to Elder Elias S. Kimball, president of the Southern States mission. He advised all parents whose sons were on missions, to exhort them to trust in the Lord, instead of furnishing them with an abundance of means. He showed that the excellent qualities of faith and trustfulness were developed by adherence to these and other principles of self-sacrifice. Men and women thus grounded in the faith were seldom moved by trial or difficulty.

Referring to a letter he had received, complaining of the existence of the First Presidency of the Church, President Smith read from Section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants, where the quorums and duties of the two great divisions of the Priesthood are defined. One who had been high in authority had even advocated that the First Presidency should not have been organized after the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith, but the presiding authority should have been left with the Apostles, with an executive committee appointed from that body to take the active management of affairs. That this idea was contrary to the order of the Priesthood was proved by the further reading of the section above referred to.

Reading concerning the conferring of the power of presiding over the whole Church upon the First Presidency, who were named in the revelation perused, he said the law of God, therefore, was to the effect that the Church should not exist for any great length of time without the three presiding officers, to represent God in the earth. The further description of the Church organization was read, to show how exact the pattern was, and how literally it must be adhered to, in order that the Church might be perfect in its organization and its workings.

The choir sang the anthem:

How beautiful upon the mountains
Are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings,
The solo of which was rendered by Sister Lizzie Thomas-Edward.