

ELDER THOMAS E. MCKAY*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

President Grant and brethren: I join with Elder Benson and other brethren who have spoken in expressing appreciation for the selection of Brother Mark Petersen as a member of the Council of the Twelve. Mark is one of the sweetest characters that I have ever met—kind, generous, tolerant, but fearless in the defense of right. I know you brethren who have not met him will love him when you do meet him, and the better acquainted you become the more you will love him.

REPORT OF CONDITIONS IN EUROPE

I am very pleased to have this opportunity of again reporting briefly the conditions in the European missions. Our members, as far as we are able to hear from them, are still carrying on. We continue to receive reports from the Palestine-Assyrian Mission; they are at least four months on the way, but they arrive. The last reports were received last Monday, April 3, and they were mailed November 30, 1943. Their Priesthood and sacrament and Relief Society meetings and also Sunday Schools are held as usual.

We also get reports regularly from the French-Swiss district. On the 20th of each month the books are closed and before the 30th, the reports are made out and mailed. The last report was that of December 1943. It stated that they had just held a district conference in LaChaux-du-Fonds, one of the most successful ever held. They began Saturday night previous to the regular sessions of the conference, with a concert. The hall was too small for the large attendance. After the preliminary part of the program they had refreshments. One of the sentences in that report, about the refreshments is rather revealing; it states, "We were delighted to be served with some real syrup." God bless them! If we only knew the conditions that exist there, brethren, we would be more willing to follow instructions to grow and store more.

The report also shows that three other successful conferences have been held; that one new hall has been rented and some of the others cleaned and remodeled; there have been ten baptisms during the year.

We were also delighted to receive a brief report from our members in Finland. This is the first time for months that we have heard anything from them. It said:

Through the grace of God, our men called to the colors have been protected. In spite of the war, fast meetings have been held regularly, and a small Sunday School is sustained in the Larsmo Branch, which is attended by children, almost entirely, of non-members.

These brethren and sisters are paying their tithing, although they cannot send the money out of Finland; so they have accumulated quite a sum; and it is recommended by the presiding elder that some of the money be used for the purchase of a building lot for a chapel.

We have also heard from the Danish Mission. Two sheets of their

publication, *Skandinavians Stjerne*, were mailed from Sweden, and I quote as follows:

A bright moment in 1943 was the reopening of the Frederikshavn Branch, where the Saints have exhibited a zeal and joy for the Gospel that is inspirational. This, the most northern branch in Denmark, should have splendid future possibilities for success, and to other branches and members be an excellent example to pattern after. The Saints in that city do not hesitate to walk eight and ten miles to attend a meeting.

During the past year we came in singular manner in contact with a former missionary, Elder Homer P. Anderson, who at present is in German captivity. Many will remember Brother Anderson from his labors in Esbjerg and Copenhagen. He sends his greetings to everyone individually and writes: "I am praying for the Saints." Do not let us forget him, either, in our prayers.

Through the Women's Relief Society, we have rejoiced in being able to assist our Norwegian brethren and sisters who were in need. To judge by the letters we have received, the provisions we have been able to send to them have been the means to relieve them of real want.

All the Saints in Denmark took this merciful act to heart, and had it been in their power to do so, they would have done it more effectively.

The statistical report, for the year 1943, December not included, shows: baptisms performed, 21; children blessed, 16; members who died, 12; promoted in the Priesthood, 24; marriages, 3.

All the meetings must be held in the daytime, as the people are not permitted to be out after dark.

From the Swedish Mission we get reports regularly as usual, although they, as all other reports, are censored. Quoting from the last letter received March 27, dated January 14:

We celebrated our fifth Christmas with thankful feelings toward God in heaven. Our cities are again immersed in light; provisions and other commodities are exhibited in store windows, and the rationing of commodities has to some extent improved in defiance of the prolongation of the war.

There are at present in this land about 35,000 fugitives of different nationalities, with whom we are sharing our bread, and we know that the Lord blesses our government for our charities which the nation as a whole has contributed. Of course, a certain amount of inflation has been felt, and there are, without doubt, many difficulties for some of our citizens to get debits and credits to balance.

This year we have baptized nineteen people, ordained twenty-five to the Priesthood, and blessed twenty-one children, from all of which we see that the Lord has been good to us. We are so grateful for the peace, love and unity that prevails. We do thank the Lord for the spiritual help which has been manifest in actions. For instance, tithing shows a very substantial increase each year since 1939, and the year 1943 has been especially good.

From the British Mission the last letter, received March 18 and mailed February 24, states:

The *Church News* and *The Improvement Era*, and other magazines are coming in fairly regularly, and we thank you for the material we receive. We have a permit now to send some Church literature to our members of the Church who are prisoners of war. The pocket edition of the Book of Mormon and *The Principles of the Gospel* have been distributed to all service members with whom we can possibly get into contact, that is, those who

have not received the books direct from Zion. Altogether about 600 packets have been distributed.

We have held altogether three L.D.S. service men's conferences, one in London, one in Wigan, and the last one in Birmingham, at which there were about 200 service men and approximately that number of our local members, chiefly young people, present. It was a grand affair. We began on Saturday afternoon with a basketball game between two L.D.S. teams from the north of England. It was a lively game, attended by about 300 people. A sociable, get-acquainted hour was the next item on the program. Then a grand concert followed, and the evening concluded with our Gold and Green Ball.

Sunday was devoted to the L.D.S. service men's conference, and the chapel was packed to capacity. We are planning another missionwide service men's conference to be held sometime in May.

In various parts of the country the brethren in the forces are taking advantage of holding services, Mutual classes and religious discussions. There are at least a dozen places where our brethren are doing this very valued work.

ADVICE TO MEMBERS UPON WITHDRAWAL OF MISSIONARIES

After the 699 missionaries had been evacuated from the twelve missions in the European group, shortly after the beginning of this world war, our members naturally were somewhat discouraged, downhearted and blue. We encouraged them as best we could, advised them as we advise our new missionaries, especially those who are somewhat homesick, and perhaps lovesick, that the best tonic, the best remedy for such sickness and for the blues is a gospel conversation. It is also a good remedy for worry. I think it is really as good—and that is saying something for me—as a fishing trip. You can forget your worries through a Gospel conversation.

We also suggested to our members this motto, or slogan, as we called it: "Every member a missionary." From the reports and letters, I am sure that most of our members are living up to that motto. I would suggest, if I may, that slogan to you fine mission presidents who are here representing the seventeen missions in the North American group. You are losing most of your missionaries; they are being "evacuated" or transferred to the service of our country, and I am sure that the members, if they would follow this motto, could carry on the work. "Every member a missionary."

I know every service man is a missionary. God bless them. I was delighted with President Grant's message to our service men. They are preaching the Gospel, and in the most effective way, as President Grant stated, by their example. People generally, and especially young people, would rather at any time see a sermon than hear one.

EXAMPLE BETTER THAN PREACHING

May I suggest, too, brethren, that we have an opportunity here at home, by our example, to preach the Gospel. There are thousands of strangers in our midst, and if we would keep in mind always the first part of the thirteenth Article of Faith: "We believe in being honest, true,

chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men," and to so live that it could be said of all of us who are here this morning, and the Latter-day Saints generally, not that we believe only, but that we are honest, we are true, we are chaste, we are benevolent, we are virtuous and we are doing good to all men, it would not matter so much then if we did not have so many missionaries in the field, such an example would be much more effective than all our preaching.

May our Father in Heaven give us the desire, the will-power; the courage and the faith to so live and to follow His slogan, His admonition: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven," I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER JOHN A. ISRAELSON

Former President of the Norwegian Mission

Brother Benson mentioned the suspense he had been under. May I say that since returning from the Norwegian Mission in December of 1939, I too have experienced some of the feelings mentioned by him.

I am happy today to meet with you, my brethren, and to report briefly my experiences in that far-off land of the midnight sun.

In July of '39, I received a telephone message from President McKay that he would like me and my good wife to meet with the First Presidency, that a vacancy was to be filled in the presidency of the Norwegian Mission. We came to Salt Lake and were very happy to accept this call. In August we attended the Mission School, and had some very fine, inspirational experiences with the missionaries there, ready to depart for the mission field.

President Colton received the word early in September that those missionaries who had been called to the European countries would have to be transferred to other missions, war had broken out, and they would be unable to go to the missions to which they were called. Some were to have gone to Scandinavia, and they expressed real disappointment that they had to be assigned to other mission fields.

We were scheduled to sail on the steamship "Manhattan," to an English port. That had to be cancelled and passage secured on a Norwegian steamer, sailing from New York direct to Norway, by way of the northern route.

In going to Norway we passed through the British blockade, landed in Bergen, Norway, and traveled by rail from there to the capital city of Oslo.

President A. Richard Peterson and his wife were at the railroad station to meet us, and then for the first time we learned that all the missionaries had been called out of Norway. He said: "I feel sorry for you, President Israelson, to be called here to preside over a mission and having no missionaries."

Some forty of them had left and others were ready to sail the following Wednesday.