

ELDER MARK E. PETERSEN

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

A SHORT time ago, in company with Brother J. Leonard Love of the welfare committee, I had the opportunity of attending a stake conference at Snowflake, Arizona. While there, we were invited to a dinner which was being held for the Aaronic Priesthood boys of the stake. It was a memorable occasion. The program was delightful. Several beautiful numbers were given, one of which was a solo by a young boy who had a clear soprano voice. It was a solo which brought back to my mind a number of wonderful memories. That young man stood up before those four hundred or more boys and sang:

A "Mormon" boy, a "Mormon" boy,
I am a "Mormon" boy;
I might be envied by a king,
For I am a "Mormon" boy.

That song was written by Evan Stephens, and as it was sung, I remembered that as a boy I sang this song also; and I had the opportunity of singing with a large boys' chorus here in this Tabernacle under the direction of Evan Stephens. I learned to honor him then, and I loved this song. Let me read to you a little more from it:

My father is a "Mormon" true,
And when I am a man,
I want to be like him, and do
Just all the good I can.
My faults I'll try to overcome,
And while I life enjoy,
With pride I'll lift my head and say,
I am a "Mormon" boy.
A "Mormon" boy, a "Mormon" boy,
I am a "Mormon" boy;
I might be envied by a king,
For I am a "Mormon" boy.

About this time my father was my Sunday School teacher, and a little later he became the instructor in our deacons' quorum. I used to honor him as I sang this song. I also remembered

my heavenly Father, and the command which the Savior gave us to strive to become like him. And then as I would sing this song, not only would I have gratitude to my earthly father, but to my heavenly Father, also, and I would sing, "I want to be like him, and do just all the good I can."

As I listened to that boy in Snowflake sing this song, I thought how often it is that our boys and our girls, when they get into junior high and possibly into senior high, feel as if they are growing up and must put away childish things. It is true that they must put away certain childish acts, but other things which are taught them in childhood are so very important and so basic that all through their lives they must remember them. The message of this song by Evan Stephens is one of them.

A "Mormon" boy. . . .
I might be envied by a king,
For I am a "Mormon" boy.

And then there was another song that I loved very much as a young lad. It carries with it another glorious lesson which our young people should remember even though they begin to grow up in those high school years. The song to which I refer is one written by Eliza R. Snow. You remember that Sister Snow wrote, "O My Father," "How Great the Wisdom and the Love," and some others of our most beautiful hymns. But she knew also how to write for young people. In this beautiful song she placed the ideals of the Church in the language of children, and had them sing it in the hope that as they grew up they would not abandon the ideals of which she spoke, but would allow them to become steadily more important in their lives. I hope every one of you continues to sing it, and to hum it over as you go along the street, and that you remember the great lessons she wrote into it:

In our lovely Deseret,
Where the Saints of God have met,
There's a multitude of children all around;
They are generous and brave;
They have precious souls to save;
They must listen and obey the gospel's
sound.

All of you know those words. Aren't they glorious? And isn't it stimulating music which has been written to these words? But listen to some of the more important things Sister Snow taught to young people in their childhood, hoping to establish in their hearts by song the high standards that are so vital and important to these boys and girls as they grow up and accomplish the things that Brother Lee has referred to here this morning:

That the children may live long
And be beautiful and strong
Tea and coffee and tobacco they despise,
Drink no liquor, and they eat
But a very little meat;
They are seeking to be great and good and
wise.

When I was in school one time, I accompanied the class to Provo and went through the institution down there for the mentally afflicted. We saw one young man there who had a queer tendency in that he always wanted to be striking himself on the head. I remember as students how we thought this man was so to be pitied because he didn't have any more sense than to strike himself on the head. As we were talking about that one day, I thought of this song:

That the children may live long,
And be beautiful and strong,
Tea and coffee and tobacco they despise,
Drink no liquor, and they eat
But a very little meat.

As young people we talked about it, remembering this man who wanted to strike himself on the head. One of the students then said, "Well, which is crazier, to be batting yourself on the head all the time, or to be taking things into your body that would poison you? Which is worse—to poison your body

and defile it, to make yourself intoxicated so that you don't know what you are doing, even losing your self-control, or to bat yourself on the head? Which is the crazier of the two?

Now think in terms of modern science. Think how doctors are discovering, despite the arguments of all the tobacco companies, to the contrary, that you do tend to develop cancer of the lung through cigars. Which is crazier, to bat yourself on the head with a stick, or to bring into your body these things that will destroy your body? Which is crazier?

Drink no liquor, and they eat
But a very little meat;
They are seeking to be great and good and
wise.

I ask you young people, is there anything childish in this song when you really think about it? Can you see anything childish in this injunction to avoid these stimulants, these narcotics, these intoxicating things, which not only affect your body adversely but will also destroy your spirituality and your faith in God, if you allow them to?

That the children may live long
And be beautiful and strong,
Tea and coffee and tobacco

and liquor and all these other evil things they despise!

And then there is the next stanza:

They should be instructed young
How to watch and guard the tongue,
And their tempers train, and evil passions
bind;
They should always be polite,
And treat ev'rybody right,
And in ev'ry place be affable and kind.

I have thought a great deal about that at different times. I am sure we should be instructed young. I recall that Solomon said that if we are properly taught when we are young, we will not depart from those important things when we grow up.

We should watch and guard the tongue. I used to think this meant only profanity, and that is extremely im-

Monday, April 5

Third Day

portant, because one of the great commandments is that we shall not profane the name of God. He will not allow us to go free if we do profane his holy name.

But the more I think of the things that Brother Lee so beautifully discussed here this morning, the more I am convinced that Eliza R. Snow was inspired in guiding the young people to watch and guard the tongue against speaking of evil and demoralizing things which put evil thoughts in the minds and sometimes lead to evil acts which are themselves destructive of the very soul; including evil stories and evil remarks about the opposite sex. "They should be instructed young how to watch and guard the tongue, and their tempers train." And that is so important.

"And evil passions bind. . . ."

I, too, get letters from young people. I got one the other day from a girl who wanted to know, Is it wrong to pet? She said, frankly, "I don't know. Will you tell me, is it wrong to pet?" And I wrote back to that girl and told her that petting is one of the most pernicious things that ever came into the world, and that when young people pet they lay the foundation for the destruction of their morals. In fact petting is in and of itself a partial loss of virtue, and when any young people pet, they to that degree lose their chastity. The Lord said that when anyone looks upon others to lust after them, they have committed adultery with them already in their heart.

They should be instructed young,
How to watch and guard the tongue,
And their tempers train, and evil pas-
sions bind;
They should always be polite,
And treat ev'rybody right,
And in ev'ry place be affable and kind.

Nothing childish in that, is there? Shouldn't we, as we grow up, even through high school and college and into mature adulthood continue to sing "In Our Lovely Deseret"?

And then this last verse which every one of us should remember, particularly as young people, because it will help us to keep on the right path:

They must not forget to pray,
Night and morning, ev'ry day,
For the Lord to keep them safe from ev'ry
ill,
And assist them to do right,
That with all their mind and might,
They may love him and may learn to do
his will.

As I have studied that song and the philosophy expressed in it by this glorious poet, I begin to understand what in my boyhood I did not understand: why it is that a Mormon boy might be envied by a king.

And now because I have some realization of what Sister Snow wrote in this song, I can understand that you girls of the Church, every one of you, might well be envied by a queen, if you will but live up to the principles of the everlasting gospel.

And every boy in the Church truly might be envied by a king because he himself is kingly by reason of the righteousness, the cleanliness, the faithfulness of his life.

May every boy and girl experience that joy is my humble prayer, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

We have just listened to Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. The Brigham Young University Combined Choruses will now favor us with "And the Glory of the Lord," conducted by Elder Don L. Earl. The benediction will be offered by Elder Lorin F. Jones, formerly President of the Spanish American Mission, after which this Conference will be adjourned until 2 o'clock this afternoon.

The singing for this session has been furnished by the Brigham Young University Combined Choruses under the direction of Elder Don L. Earl; Elder Alexander Schreiner is at the organ. These singers will be with us again this