

LEST WE FORGET

By Newel K. Young

"But I shall not dwell upon the struggles, hardships, and sorrows of the pioneers. We should forget these things."

These words were spoken by one of our brethren who came to Utah in the early days as a babe in his mother's arms. I had gone to a neighboring ward to hear him speak to the parents' class on the subject, "The 'Mormon' Pioneers."

I had expected to hear an appeal to remember our pioneers with all their sorrows and triumphs. The admonition to forget the struggles and sufferings of our fathers found no echo in my heart. As I understood our brother he felt that we should forget the suffering and struggles, remembering only the joys and triumphs. It was painful to me to judge the man's words adversely, for his hair and beard were white. But I felt that he was wrong. I still feel that he was mistaken; and after much thought I believe that the influence of such an opinion is fraught with danger. I believe that victory and triumph can never stand out in glory except they stand on the foundation of struggles and suffering. The successes of our parents are meaningless and lifeless, seen apart from the awful background of their self-denials, struggles, and sorrows, for from these come the abiding, eternal joys and happiness.

To forget the awful struggles, the terrible hardships, and the heart-breaking sorrows of our fathers and mothers is to shut out forever from our vision their heroic courage, their wonderful patience, their faith and Godlike love. Yes, it is literally to deny ourselves the only possible bond of sympathetic love and reverent honor for them. So surely as we forget the heavy burdens laid upon their backs, and the withering sufferings through which they labored, we will blot out for us the path made by their example that should make our "footsteps quick and sure."

No, we must not forget! To the sons and daughters of the "Mormon" pioneers has been given the choicest heritage that has blessed any generation since time began on this earth. To truly appreciate any gift or privilege or blessing one must have a true sense of its cost. Hence we must feel deeply the sorrows and sufferings of our parents, and appreciate keenly their noble achievements and wonderful triumphs, if we are to inherit in any goodly degree their wisdom and strength. We must appreciate their trials to feel the inspiration and the glory of their living.

We can never love our peaceful mountain homes, and our beautiful schools and churches and temples as we should, only as we remember that our parents worked in cold and hunger, often with sore, bleeding hearts, to make possible for us all this beauty and comfort and peace.

But if we are to realize the full cost of our inheritance we must still remember the persecutions of Missouri, and the heart-burnings of Nauvoo, the wounds and deaths at

Carthage. And with this in mind consider the faith and courage of the people, and the songs and revelations given through our poets and the prophet during those days, as a means of inspiration and guidance.

These words of Joseph's, "I am going like a lamb" (he might have said *the* lamb) "to the slaughter, but I am as calm as a summer's morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men," can only be felt in all their sublime grandeur by those who know the prophet's life from his childhood to that hour. From the lips of another, these words would have little or no meaning, though they are surpassed in their calm courage and infinite love only by those of our Lord on Calvary, "Father, forgive them."

So I say that to possess the abiding richness of the prophet's words and life we must go back to that morning in spring, when the boy saw the Father and Son in that eastern wood and received the revelation that is to revolutionize the world. We must feel with this tender, affectionate lad the cold scorn and cruel hatred that made him an outcast among his comrades and adult friends from that hour. We must accompany him on his lonely way during these years of youth, as he proves true to his visions and trusts in the face of the hardest temptations and sufferings. Then during his young manhood, we must walk with him amid the temptations and crafty designs of the evil and ungodly that would have appalled any but the bravest and truest. We must feel that hatred of his enemies and the treachery and deep-dyed hatred of his trusted friends and brethren who betray him. Only as we grasp all of these is it possible for us to be lifted up and inspired to noble deeds by his example.

Even so we must not forget the loyalty and unflinching courage of our fathers, and the devotion and self-sacrifice of our mothers, for this same prophet and his successors and their brethren of this day, if we are to prove worthy of our parentage.

Surely we can never forget why our fathers came to these mountain valleys, nor how they redeemed them, replacing the desert wastes with fruitful orchards, rich fields, and blossoming gardens. Love for the right, and devotion to God brought our parents over plain and mountain to the barren wilderness of these valleys. I have no sympathy and scant patience with the sons of our pioneers who through their learning and philosophy attribute to our parents no higher motives than economic advantage in coming to this land. They have already forgotten, and are severing the ties that bind them to their fathers, by their intellectual blindness; for the intellect does grow blind and wanders from the way of life when it denies the witness of the heart and spirit. Be not deceived. Enlightened love of God and his truth led our fathers and mothers to this land.

With glad, stout hearts they faced the task of establishing themselves here. The undertaking was said by those who knew the country best to be impossible. But undaunted by desert dangers, or savage beasts, and more savage Indians they planned and built so well that the world stands in wonder before their accomplishments when they see them.

Nor can we forget how they wrought out their salvation in the new land that had been preserved for them. There are two mighty factors to this problem, and I sometimes fear that we are forgetting one of them. There was a dual partnership involved in the redemption from desert wastes of these valleys of the free; that we must remember if we are to continue to be God's chosen people. And we are his chosen people. Only in craven cowardice can we refuse to stand forth before the world as the agents and witnesses of the Father and the Son.

The partnership to which I referred a moment ago was a compact entered into between our fathers and the God who chose them and led them here to establish Zion in these mountain valleys. Our pioneers were to give their lives in willing service to this task; and whenever their strength and labor failed to save them from ruin or disaster, the Father was to come in answer to their prayers of faith to rescue them. How loyally and nobly both parties to this covenant kept faith with each other. Do we appreciate the friendship that grew up between God and our parents through this union of purpose and effort?

The saying "Labor accomplishes all things," is too readily accepted by many. It is not true. Faith is required to do many things that labor cannot do. Recently a good man in speaking of his father's greatness said: "Yes, and he accomplished all this by his own effort and industry." As a boy the father had come from the old country poor and alone. I often hear the following said regarding the splendid achievements of our pioneers: "All this is a witness of their industry and wisdom." This is a half-truth that darkens and misleads.

Why, as I go about among our fields in the country on spring days, even the gulls sing a truer note than that to me. How different from the above are the words of one of our bishops to me a few months ago. He was visiting at our home. I mentioned the fact that his mother had been a remarkable woman. She, too, had come here from across the deep, alone and poor. He answered like this: "Yes, mother was a remarkable woman. I realized it more after my mission to Sweden when I became acquainted with her people. But, Brother Young, I never forget that it was her faith and the gospel that made her all she was."

By faith, as well as works, our fathers wrought and conquered. Note this picture: Men and women and children are fighting with all their might and strength to save their crops, their only hope of a means of living through the winter, from the crickets. The mothers having had to go home to care for their babes are anxiously watching the fight that means life or death for their children.

Baffled and weary, with bowed heads, the fathers return to their cabin homes and families. The mothers, with children about their knees, and in their arms, or breathing feebly beneath their hearts, meet their husbands at their doors with words of hope and faith. Labor has done its utmost and failed. In faith each household seeks the Lord; answering that faith the Father of all reaches out his hand and saves them. This story must never die, but it can live only in the hearts of children who do not forget the

sufferings of their parents. This is not the only time that the Lord in his might saved the whole people.

Two simple pictures are indelibly impressed upon my heart. A short time after my grandfather had been buried among the Indians on the plains, my grandmother gave birth to a child. Before the babe was a week old a storm came that washed the dirt from the roof of the hut that sheltered the mother and child. The rain poured through the unprotected roof until the two, with every article of clothing and bedding that they had, were wet through and through. In her anguish of soul the mother cried out in her husband's name, "Newel, why have you left us alone and uncared for in this wild country?"

The answer came to her soul in low, assuring peace: "Lydia, I am with you. The Lord will care for you and the children, and you shall reach the valley in safety. Not one of you shall perish." Though she was chilled to the bone, a glow of warmth passed through her whole body, and mother and child were fast asleep in a few minutes. The next morning the mother arose and did her work from then on. Thousands of times during those blessed pioneer days did our Father thus come to the rescue of those who were helpless by their own labor and strength to save themselves.

The next year this woman with her children reached the valley in safety. A cow that had been worked as an ox across the plains, and whose calf was two years old, was still giving a little milk. Grandmother had saved enough cream for a churning. From some source she had secured a few pounds of wheat flour. The children were in high spirits over the prospects of a feast on white bread and butter.

When the butter was prepared for use the mother gathered her children about her and said, "There is just a pound of butter. Old Boss may go dry before we get the tenth churning. Shall we eat this and run the risk of getting a pound for tithing later? Or shall we pay the first to the Lord?" The children all agreed that the first should be paid for tithing. Only those who know what hunger is can feel the power of this simple tale. Thus our pioneer fathers and mothers lived, giving the first and the best to the Lord.

I cannot forebear calling attention here to another incident of those early days. Sister Mary Fielding Smith, the widow of our beloved Hyrum, was going with her son Joseph to pay the tithing on their meager harvest. A good brother protested against her paying tithing. Hear her reply: "What! would you deprive me of one of the choice blessings of the gospel?" The man must have felt reprov'd, for both the logic and the spirit of the woman's words are unanswerable. Sister Smith was standing squarely on one of the fundamental laws of life. No wonder her son stands today in the very image of his father as the chosen prophet and leader of God's people.

Should we forget? Can we forget?

The son or daughter who can forget the struggles and sorrows of his pioneer father and mother will by the same process of moral and religious degeneration forget the sorrow of

Gethsemane and the sufferings of Calvary. Rather let us remember Him who sorrowed and suffered there; and in deep earnestness let us go often in prayerful mood, by the noblest powers of our imagination, to walk with the Master to the Garden and the Cross.

In the Garden let us hear Him say to his three most trusted friends: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Then we shall stand apart uncovered and bowed in silence while he suffers and prays as no other can suffer. Now hear his self-sacrificing prayer, "Father, not my will, but thine be done," as he willingly offers his life for us in accord with the Father's will. How our hearts leap with joy when the angel comes to minister to him for his strengthening.

We shall stay near by during all those awful hours of the trial to see his godly patience and self-control, remembering that we are to cultivate all manly virtues until they grow into godly attributes. Nor can we "leave him nor return from following after" him until he reaches Calvary and dies on the cross. We are touched in the hour of his terrible suffering and death by his tender consideration of his mother; but we are transformed when we hear him plead, "*Father, forgive them.*" Only then may we appreciate the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of Christ. Then, may we bear the priesthood in honor, and in very deed be his partners in the work of salvation.

Shall we forget the labors, cares, and trials of our fathers as they toiled half-fed and weary to give us the inheritance of all we enjoy? Or shall we forget the fears, the soul-hungers, and the heart-breaking sorrows of our mothers as they bore and nursed and cared for us in their poverty, hunger, and sickness? No, a thousand times no, answer the youth of Zion.

Father, mother, hear our answer: We will remember thee! We will make certain Moroni's promise to our prophet that "the gospel shall never again be taken from the earth *nor given to another people.*"

As you paid your tithes in poverty and want, we shall remember our tithes in the days of plenty and wealth. You kept the Sabbath day holy in the humble, simple life you led; we, too, shall keep the Sabbath day holy in this rushing, pleasure mad age. You revered God's name, and we shall hold it sacred. Even as you went abroad in humility and love to preach the gospel in your poverty, so we shall go forth true and humble in our prosperity. We will continue the partnership you formed with the Lord, and carry on his work as you began it.

You cleansed the land of pests and redeemed it from its barrenness; it is for us to cleanse our communities and redeem them from the vices and sins that have grown up among us. We will grapple with the problems of the blighting cigarette, the indecent fashions of dress, the evil and immoral tendencies in the dance, until our boys and girls are free from these dangers. The floods of doubt that are sweeping the world shall not blind our visions of God, nor mar our trust in him.

In a courage that knows no fear save the fear of the Lord, let us stand now and in union and strength abolish the saloon forever from our beloved state—nor cease to fight until the brothel shall follow the saloon to its death.

Our homes shall be preserved in purity and honor; and our daughters and sisters shall again be as safe with the young men of Zion as they are with their own mothers. We shall continue the work you so nobly began until jealousy and hatred, war and crime shall be no more; until love and purity and righteousness shall rule in all the earth.

"Lord God of our fathers, be with us yet, lest we forget, lest we forget."

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