

THE SONG OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Clem's mother, Elizabeth, was Welsh. Nothing would do but he be taught to sing properly. Unfortunately, he was never in what one might call "good voice" from the day he was born until the day he died. True, he could carry somewhat of a tune on occasion with the accompaniment of a singing group of which he was part, but other than that he was no particular credit to his ancestors.

President Snow's daughter, Eliza Dunford, had organized a group of singing children to perform on special occasions and particularly when there were visiting dignitaries from Great Salt Lake City. If Clem received instruction from Sister Dunford, he could be in the choir.

When the idea was first suggested, his father commented that he had observed absolutely no disposition on the part of the boy to be a singer. Furthermore there seemed to be a complete lack of talent. Undaunted by all of this Elizabeth insisted that what was needed was a little training to overcome any shortcomings. Besides didn't the scriptures say that "the song of the righteous is a prayer unto the Lord?" Clem had kept quiet up to this point but now mumbled something about he'd rather do his praying in bed. In the end his mother was not dissuaded from her objective and the boy was enrolled with Sister Dunford.

His singing career was destined to be short lived but didn't terminate until he had taken part in two or three public presentations. Clem's last public appearance as a virtuoso was to be on the occasion of Brigham Young's final public appearance before his death.

After the first two or three rehearsals, it was suggested very tactfully by the good sister that maybe Clem's talents lay elsewhere. But, his mother thought it would be a shame with the president coming and all, not to leave the boy in the choir until after the conference. She concluded that it might be true that he had too much English in him and not enough Welch.

Clem remembered that he had enjoyed seeing Brother Brigham even more than participating in the children's choir. The choir children dressed in white lined the street to welcome him into town. They were then loaded onto a hayrack decorated with streamers and flowers and taken to the bowery. Clem had fairly good schooling by then in the schools held regularly in private homes, and even at that young age liked to listen to the sermons and talks in the public square.

"I was nine years old on that occasion. The prophet came to preside at the reorganization of the Box Elder Stake and to attend Stake conference, staying at President Snow's home. Since there was no public building large enough for the gathering of all who came in from the settlements, the conference meetings were held in a bowery on the old Smith Square. I remember Brigham saying that Lorenzo Snow had worked for too many years to build up the order and the Church here for its direction to pass into unfamiliar hands and so he was calling Lorenzo's son Oliver to 'be the new Stake President and to take his father's counsel. We raised our hands and sustained this proposal without any question. He talked like a father to us and I liked what he said, though I don't remember all of it. Ten days later he died in Salt Lake City and we observed a period of mourning.

When it was all over, Clem sought out Mort Snow before walking on home to change his clothes for the evening chores. The cows didn't seem to pay much attention to Sabbath observance. They still went on making milk, so he couldn't dally too long.

Your father's not President anymore, is he?" He said to Mortimore.

"No, but he's still apostle and apostles ain't supposed to do both jobs anymore."

"Is Oliver really your brother?"

"He's half-brother. His ma is Aunt Mary Adeline, the second wife. Course he's a lot older than me."

Clem hurried on home thinking how he'd ask his father about these changes. He was not sure that he felt as comfortable and secure anymore. Unconsciously he was allowing himself certain feelings and a mind-set consistent with the strong conservative image he would eventually project for the rest of his life. His father was waiting for him to help with the milking but took his time to give him the assurance he needed. "President Lorenzo won't be letting any grass grow under his feet. He's not one to sit around being idle. You can be sure he'll still be pretty much in charge."

And he was, for another two decades.

As for the children's choir, providence took a hand. Sister Dunford's husband was made presiding bishop of Malad, a distant settlement, and although she had spent most of her time in Salt Lake prior to the conference, she spent even less time in Brigham City from that time on. For all practical purposes the choir was disbanded and Clem was off the hook.