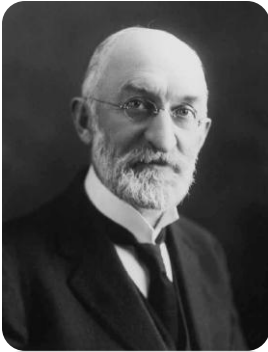


Heber J Grant

An Example to All of Us

- 1- People have all kinds of reasons for not doing all kinds of things in life. Some won't go to war. Some don't want to work. Some excuse their way out of responsibility. Some claim to be too tired, ill, busy, poor, or self-conscious to get involved. Some claim self-importance and talent only for bigger things. There are those content to let somebody else do it and others who simply talk up a storm about love or peace or investing one's humanity. Yes, there are all kinds of reasons and all kinds of people.



2- And then there was Heber J. Grant, seventh president of the Church. Heber J. Grant only needed some good reasons why he should do something, and then he was off trying. If it wasn't

an easy task, he worked to bring about the proper result anyway. He tackled the impossible with enthusiasm, rising to the challenge in seeming glee. If he didn't seem to have the natural gift to accomplish a certain thing, he practiced and prayed until he developed the skill.

- 3- . He often quoted Emerson: "That which we persist in doing becomes easier for us to do—not that the nature of the thing has changed, but that our power to do has increased." And he practiced what he preached. (Leon R. Hartshorn, "Heber J. Grant: A Man Without Excuses," *New Era*, Jan 1972, 45_
- 4- **Though Gifted, He Felt Inadequate** Heber J. Grant was a person of great ability, yet many of his public statements reveal a sense of deep humility, if not inadequacy. He felt that he measured up to the goals he set for himself only by great determination and constant effort.
- 5- He lived in a time when leaders quite often expressed appreciation for learning, artistic talent, professional success, and other achievements dependent upon what usually are defined as talents or gifts. It was in these areas that he struggled the hardest. His talents lay in the field of business and social success. These talents often escaped notice, even though they may have been more important. His strengths helped carry him over all obstacles.
- 6- **He Worked toward Excellence as an Athlete** The following story that President Heber J. Grant shared about his youth



illustrates his determination to overcome obstacles: "Being an only child, my mother reared me very carefully. Indeed, I grew more or less on the principle of a hothouse plant, the growth of which is 'long and lanky' but not substantial. I learned to sweep, and to wash and wipe dishes, but did little

stone throwing and little indulging in those sports which are interesting and attractive to boys, and which develop their physical frames. Therefore, when I joined a baseball club, the boys of my own age and a little older played in the first nine; those younger than I played in the second, and those still younger in the third, and I played with them.

- 7- "One of the reasons for this was that I could not throw the ball from one base to the other. Another reason was that I lacked physical strength to run or bat well. When I picked up a ball, the boys would generally shout: "'Throw it here, sissy!'

- 8- "So much fun was engendered on my account by my youthful companions that I solemnly vowed that I would play baseball in the nine that would win the championship of the Territory of Utah.
- 9- "My mother was keeping boarders at the time for a living, and I shined their boots until I saved a dollar which I invested in a baseball. I spent hours and hours throwing the ball at Bishop Edwin D. Woolley's barn, which caused him to refer to me as the laziest boy in the Thirteenth Ward. Often my arm would ache so that I could scarcely go to sleep at night. But I kept on practicing and finally succeeded in getting into the second nine of our club. Subsequently I joined a better club, and eventually played in the nine that won the championship of the territory and beat the nine that had won the championship for California, Colorado, and Wyoming. Having thus made good my promise to myself, I retired from the baseball arena" (*Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham [1969], 342–43).

His Penmanship Improved from "Hen Tracks" to the Best in Utah

- 10- "One day Heber was playing marbles with some other boys when the bookkeeper from the Wells Fargo Company Bank was walking down the other side of the street. One of the boys

remarked, 'That man gets \$150.00 a month.' Heber figured to himself that not counting Sundays, that man made \$6.00 a day and that at five cents a pair, he would have to black 120 pairs of boots to make \$6.00. He there and then resolved that some day he would be a bookkeeper in the Wells Fargo and Company's bank. In those days all the records and accounts of the bank were written with a pen, and one of the requisites of a good bookkeeper was the ability to write well. To learn to write well was his first approach to securing this job and the fulfillment of



his resolve; so he set to work to become a penman.

- 11- "At the beginning his penmanship was so poor that when two of his chums were looking at it one said to the other, 'That writing looks like hen tracks.' 'No,' said the other, 'it looks as if lightning had struck an ink bottle.' This touched Heber's pride and, bringing his fist down on his desk, he said, 'I'll someday be able to give you fellows lessons in penmanship.' . . . "He secured a position as bookkeeper and policy clerk in an insurance office at fifteen. About this he said: 'I wrote a very nice hand, and that was all that was needed to satisfactorily fill the position which I then had. Yet I was not fully satisfied but continued to dream and scribble when not otherwise occupied. . . . I learned to write well, so well, that I often made more before and after office hours by writing cards, invitations, and making maps than the amount of my regular salary. At nineteen I was keeping books and acting as policy clerk for Henry Wadsworth, the agent of Wells Fargo and Company. My time was not fully employed, and I was not working for the company but for the agent personally. I did the same as I had done in Mr. White's bank, volunteered to file a lot of bank letters, etc., and kept a set of books for the Sandy Smelting Company, which Mr. Wadsworth was doing personally. My actions so pleased Mr. Wadsworth that he employed me to do the collecting for Wells Fargo and Company and paid me \$20.00 a month for this work in addition to my regular compensation of \$75.00 from the insurance business. Thus I was

in the employ of Wells Fargo and Company and one of my day-dreams had become a reality" (Bryant S. Hinckley, *Heber J. Grant: Highlights in the Life of a Great Leader* [1951], 39–42).

- 12- "When Heber, still in his teens, was working as a policy clerk in the office of H. R. Mann and Co., he was offered three times his salary to go to San Francisco as a penman. He later became teacher of penmanship and bookkeeping at the University of Deseret (University of Utah). . . .
- 13- **He Was Determined to Learn to Sing** As with baseball and penmanship, Heber J. Grant was determined to learn to sing, despite the negative opinions of others. Years of practicing brought moderate success. He wrote:
- 14- "My mother tried to teach me when I was a small child to sing but failed because of my inability to carry a tune. Upon joining a singing class taught by Professor Charles J. Thomas, he tried and tried in vain to teach me when ten years of age to run the scale or carry a simple tune and finally gave up in despair. He said that I could never, in this world, learn to sing. Perhaps he thought I might learn the divine art in another world. Ever since this attempt, I have frequently tried to sing when riding alone many miles from anyone who might hear me, but on such occasions could never succeed in carrying the tune of one of our familiar hymns for a single verse, and quite frequently not for a single line.
- 15- "When I was about twenty-five years of age, Professor Sims informed me that I could sing, but added, 'I would like to be at least forty miles away while you are doing it.' . . .
- 16- "Upon my recent trip to Arizona, I asked Elders Rudger Clawson and J. Golden Kimball if they had any objections to my singing one hundred hymns that day. They took it as a joke and assured me that they would be delighted. We were on the way from Holbrook to St. Johns, a distance of about sixty miles. After I had sung about forty tunes, they assured me that if I sang the remaining sixty they would be sure to have nervous prostration. I paid no attention whatever to their appeal, but held them to their bargain and sang the full one hundred. One hundred and fifteen songs in one day, and four hundred in four days, is the largest amount of practicing I ever did.
- 17- "Today [1900] my musical deafness is disappearing, and by sitting down to a piano and playing the lead notes, I can learn a song in less than one-tenth the time required when I first commenced to practice" (*Gospel Standards*, 351–52, 354).