

to risk the operation, and they had fasted each week over the past months as the time grew close. They had been told the chances were about 50-50, but somehow none of us was surprised when the last exploratory catheterization at the Clinic revealed the condition less serious than had been supposed and when (after an anointing by her father and a local Rochester Branch brother) the operation went extremely well and she was up and skittering around after only a few days in intensive care. Last fall I felt moved to give a special blessing to a dear and extremely capable friend who was suffering anxiety and self-reproach under the pressure of his professional responsibilities and the possibility of failing his family and himself by not meeting them, and I had no doubt that the Lord would bless him with the measure of self-confidence he needed to succeed, as He did. And yesterday a faithful, long-suffering father and I were suddenly called out of our Sunday School preparation meeting to find his child in the chapel having a severe seizure. (She has had a condition from birth that causes a reaction, at entirely unpredictable moments.) As the father took her in his arms and held her jaw so she wouldn't bite her tongue, I placed my hands on her head and through the power of the priesthood rebuked the uncontrolled shaking of her entire body. As I continued to stroke her head, the shaking quickly quieted, and then we carried her to the car to be taken home to rest and I returned to explain to those who had been present what had happened and to ask their prayers for her.

The opportunities, the needs, come often, and the Lord's response forms a bright thread in the texture of gospel living. But I don't fully understand why or how. I only know that I continue to ask—and to acknowledge the Lord's hand in all things.

## **Disorder and Early Joy**

EDWARD GEARY

A few months ago, the First Presidency issued a letter to be read in Sacrament Meetings encouraging Church members to tidy up their homes and yards. It is an old story. Brigham Young preached the same message up and down the settlements. "Were I now to go into one of your houses," he declared, "perhaps I should hear the mistress inquiring for the dishcloth; but Sal does not know where it is: the last she saw of it little Abraham or Joe was playing with it out-doors. Where is the milk-pail? Turned bottom-side up on the hog-pen." A generation later, J. Golden Kimball complained that in "our beautiful Utah" one might get the impression that "nearly everybody is slipshod; barns, houses, out-buildings are fast going to ruin. The front yards are weed-grown; the fences down and hid by weeds; no flowers, no lawns, no vegetable gardens, no family orchards, or if there is, the trees are old, sickly, and neglected." He went on to say, "No greater blessing can come to this people than a thorough and general cleaning of homes and surroundings." But such exhortations have availed little, at least in Utah. (Idaho may be a little better. I cannot comment on the Mormon towns in Arizona, but Owen Wister once reported a sermon by old Bishop Thatcher whose main theme was that swill should be fed to the pigs, not dumped in the dooryard.)

To grow up in rural Utah is to inherit a tradition of unpainted outbuildings, tumbled-down fences, and superannuated farm implements: a world held together with bailing wire. According to a friend who has returned to the state after some years in the Midwest, a true Utahan cannot be perfectly happy unless he has an old Buick rusting away in the pasture. In my memory it wasn't a Buick but a 1923 Dodge with wooden-spoked wheels, decaying gently under an apricot tree beside my grandfather's tool shed. (The *new* Dodge was a 1934 model which served until 1949 when the steering wheel came off in my grandmother's hands while she was driving downtown and Grandfather bought a new Plymouth.) The side-curtains had disappeared long ago, and chickens sometimes laid eggs in a corner of the back seat where the cotton poked through the brittle fabric, but it was still a fine car, with its adjustable windshield and its thick steering wheel and the spark advance lever that could be moved back and forth. It was a fine car, but there were even finer things in Grandfather's barnyard: an old threshing machine with hatches that opened up revealing wonderful spaces to crawl into, and, best of all, the steam engine which had once powered the thresher. The steam engine was a monstrous thing with a long boiler and a high smokestack, all thick with rust. It was hard work to climb up the huge, cleated iron wheels, but when you got to the operator's perch it was all worth while, to be able to look down at the world and have before you such an abundance of valves and gauges. There was nothing more to wish for except that, somehow, it might be possible to fire up the boiler once more: not to set the monster into lurching motion (that was too much even to dream of) but to pull the whistle-cord, as my father had pulled it when he was a boy, and hear the shriek, the wail, the long sound break the stillness of the country air.

The old Dodge, the threshing machine, and the steam engine all became casualties of the Second World War, gathered up with the rest of the really good stuff in the scrap-iron drives of 1942-43. Their loss brought the war much closer to home than the newsreels that we saw each Thursday night at the Ward Budget picture show, closer even (to me at six years old) than the funerals with flag-draped caskets. Of the big things that remained, the binder was probably the best, with its high seat and its levers that could raise things or lower them and mesh or unmesh gears. But it was a poor substitute for a steam engine.

Fortunately there were consolations. There was the town dump on a piece of dry flat ground above the canal. No one in our town had heard of sanitary land-fill then, and so whatever anyone wanted to get rid of was simply hauled or dragged to the dump and left there. Except for the dead animals, which made for some olfactory unpleasantness, the dump was a delight to all the senses, with shards of broken glass glittering all colors in the sunlight and with bulky shapes of inexhaustible variety: bathtubs, washtubs, cookstoves, a brass bucket that had been discarded for no apparent reason but a small hole in the bottom, and derelict car bodies too far gone even for the scrap-iron drives. I remember one that rested on its firewall with the rear end high in the air, as though it had been driven literally into the ground. There were wonderful tactile sensations at the dump: the smoothness of a lump of glass dug out of the ashes of a fire; the grainy texture of the rust on an old dishpan. And there were the sounds: the wind whistling across the chimney-hole of an old stove; all of the thumps and thunks and plinks that rewarded the throwing of a rock at any of a thousand targets.

The trouble with a dump, though, is that it is all refuse. Its treasures are somehow devalued by the fact that they have been thrown away, that somebody

didn't want them anymore. There is an important distinction to be made here. The town dump was full of trash. Some people's yards and sheds were trashy too, but not Grandfather's. He considered himself and was considered by his neighbors to be an orderly man. If he wanted to get rid of something, if he thought it was useless, he took it to the dump. Consequently, the stuff which remained had never been discarded, just *put* someplace in the expectation that it might come in handy someday. It was a world of yet unrealized possibility, a vast reservoir of potential awaiting a creative use. And so, for example, when Grandfather wanted to make me a toy threshing machine (this was after the real one had been taken away) he had but to step into the toolshed to find conveniently at hand an old powder box, various-sized pulleys, and a bit of copper tubing to fashion into a crank for operating power. It was like having a year's supply of every good thing imaginable.

There were so many, many things in that toolshed. Before I was born, Grandfather had operated a general store, in addition to his farm, and so besides the branding irons and bits of harness and half-empty cans of neatsfoot oil, there were fixtures and other odds and ends from the store: sturdy oak cases with glass tops and fronts and sliding wooden doors at the back; a rack with a mirror on it and the words "J & P Coats" embossed in gold; one chest containing dozens of tiny drawers in which could be found interesting things of all descriptions—bunches of white paper tags hanging from loops of string, thin folders of Bull Durham cigarette papers, unused salesbooks with "Geary Mercantile, Where the Dollar Gets Its Value" printed at the top of each page. One case had once held powdered ginger root, and the pungent odor remained for us to draw in at each breath as we played. Years later I walked past the open door of a Chinese grocery in San Francisco and caught the unexpected aroma of ginger. Instantly the vision of that toolshed rose before me. I could feel the damp earth floor. I could see the slanting beams of light where the sun shone through cracks high in the walls and illuminated a column of dust motes. Most of all, I could see the things: poled in corners, hung on walls, tucked into nooks here and there, protruding from the dark recesses beneath the attached granary: so many things, and each of them just the sort of thing that might come in handy someday.

I don't know how Grandfather accumulated it all in a single lifetime. It is clear to me, now that I've completed more than half of my three score and ten, that I will never match his collection: not with a house in suburbia and a bishop who keeps reminding me that the Brethren want us to take pride in our homes and a wife who grew up in a military family where one's possessions had to be limited to what could be packed in a single AWOL bag and whose idea of unnecessary belongings is anything that hasn't been used in the last week. Some men cherish the secret dream of escaping to a South Seas island teeming with brown-limbed maidens. Others hope to retire at fifty and spend the golden years playing shuffleboard at Leisure World. But I am looking for an old farmstead somewhere in a forgotten corner of Utah. The house isn't important, but I want a sway-backed barn that has never known a coat of paint (except perhaps for a faded sign on the side extolling the virtues of Scowcroft's Never-rip Overalls). I want an old granary with a set of deer's antlers over the door. I want an apricot tree and a yellow transparent apple and a few hollyhocks growing at random in the yard. I want to find a place whose inhabitants never threw anything away that might come in handy someday. There will be a broken harrow next to the pigpen, a lop-sided grindstone leaning against the