

too soon, compelled as he is to be the man of the house most of the time. There is a fine passage in chapter ten describing a journey to the Mormon colonies in Mexico, where John W. Taylor is taking some of his wives to avoid legal problems in the States. As usual, Joseph's mother must pose as a widow, managing her five young children entirely by herself while her husband sits in another part of the train giving his full attention to Rhoda, the new wife. Here is the encounter:

In the car ahead, Father was seated with Rhoda, laughing, joking, having a gay time. The children dutifully said nothing, but their large eyes picked him out instantly, staring at him and the dark-haired beauty beside him; their heads turned as they approached his seat, looked back as they went past.

"Watch where you're going, children," Mother said.

Then the baby saw her father, reached out her arms and began to bawl. "Shh, darling. Shh."

"Beautiful children, Madam," Father said.

"Thank you, sir. Traveling makes them so cross." Mother hurried on.

Then she must deal with the resentment of her eldest son:

"We can't speak to him, but Rhoda Welling can laugh and joke with him all day long every day. I don't like it."

"Father is helping her pass the time away."

"Is she traveling alone?"

"I'm sure I don't know, dear." She bent to his ear. "Joseph."

He waited. "Yes, Mother?"

But he couldn't know. Not yet. In case of trouble she couldn't have the responsibility of the knowledge upon him. "Try to understand, darling."

"I think I do, Mother. And I don't like it."

What, we wonder, will happen to this boy? What form will Joseph's resentment take when he is eighteen? I value *Family Kingdom* because it raises such questions as these. I wish it explored them more thoroughly.

Fatherly Advice

WILLIAM MULDER

My Dear Son: Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons. Edited by Dean C. Jessee. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974. 375 pp., \$9.95.

The fiddles are tuning in Mormon historiography. Not only is there a great deal of activity as new histories are written and old classics revived; there is, more importantly, a new professionalism. Mormon scholars have come of age: they have learned the tools of their trade and have achieved a certain objectivity and composure in dealing with their extraordinary history. The amateurs and apologists are still around, but now, *officially*, if we are to judge from what has been happening in the Historical Department, the Church seems to favor the trained historian and an educated handling of its great storehouse of materials. A new spirit animates the original commission that "There shall be a record kept among you," and modern means are being put at its service. A *Guide to the Historical Department* welcomes

scholars and, indeed, provides them with a list of "Finding Aids" for exploring the riches of the Archives and the Library in the new Church Office Building in Salt Lake, a towering western Vatican: a journal list, collection registers, indexes (printed, film, and card), and catalogs of manuscripts, minute books, photos, and printed materials. The staff of trained researchers and historians in the Historical Division promises to rival the industry and output of H. H. Bancroft's famous history workshop, with Leonard Arrington, Church Historian, and Davis Bitton, Assistant, setting the pace, not only writing books themselves but each serving as general editor of multi-volumed projects—Arrington of a new comprehensive history of the Church and a Mormon Heritage Series, and Bitton of the Peregrine Smith Classic Mormon Diary Series.

Dean Jessee, a member of Arrington's impressive team, has edited *My Dear Son: The Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons* (the first volume in the Heritage Series), a collection of ninety-five letters found in the archives. The Church Archives, says the general editor, "has the responsibility of making available materials in the archives that would be edifying and informative." The qualification "edifying" is without doubt an important principle of selection and we can only wonder what silent omissions and censorship take place under that well-intentioned but preceptorial standard. Mormon literature must, of course, be faith-promoting, and perhaps it is not a question of an editor's mistrusting the ability of truth to carry the day but more a matter of understandable taste and propriety.

These qualms aside, the present collection of the letters Brigham Young wrote to thirteen of his seventeen sons is a model of editorial care and completeness, exemplifying the new professionalism. An immense labor of research lies behind the volume, giving it an exceptional documentary value: biographies of each of the sons (including the four to whom no letters are extant); an introduction providing setting, circumstance, and continuity for each letter with generous quotation from the other half of the correspondence, the existing letters from the sons themselves; annotations; a biographical appendix for every name mentioned in the letters; a chronology of events in the life of Brigham Young; a list of all the wives by whom he had children, and a chronology of those children; a chronological listing of the letters themselves (since in the body of the work the letters are grouped according to the son to whom they were written); and finally an exhaustive name, place, and subject index. No pains have been spared to provide every informational aid by way of reference and cross reference. And no pains have been spared in Keith Montague's design and the physical production of the book: it is a handsome volume, printed on laid paper, bound in buckram, with Brigham Young in his prime on the cover, in magisterial broadcloth in old age as frontispiece, and an enlargement of his signature spread across the front end-pages. A photograph, in appropriate oval frame, of each son faces the biographical sketch which introduces the group of letters addressed to him. An additional aesthetic pleasure is the superlative Foreword by Jack H. Adamson, whose books on Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Harry Vane have acquainted him with both the greatness and the shortcomings of public men. His shrewd estimate but evident admiration, touched with irony, of Brigham lift the volume briefly into literature.

Most of the letters by far—65 of them—were written in the 1870s, when Brigham Young himself was in his seventies; 25 were written in the 1860s, only five in the 1850s. It was Brigham old but vigorous: "My health is good and I feel first rate." In 1873 we find him wishing, "health permitting," he could "go and help the brethren found a city somewhere on the Colorado River on the line of the projected Southern

Pacific Railroad." It is Brigham benign and paternalistic toward his sons and, toward the rest of the world, self-assured, firmly entrenched in the faith and in the works of Zion so materially visible on every hand; Brigham vindicated against schismatics within and enemies without. The continuing efforts of the Gentiles to disturb the peace of Zion only amuse him: "Our new marshall has arrived . . . a quiet everyday person, a kind of third-rate politician." He was shrewd enough to know, as he confides in one letter to Willard, who was a cadet at West Point, that "Our commerical enterprises . . . have a powerful effect in heading off those who would introduce strife and discord in our midst, as it is so much to the interest of capitalists wherever we deal to have business undisturbed here." Not a doubt assails him, only irritation at either a divorce proceeding or yet another defamation, a pachyderm switching his tail at flies, as he adjures his sons to walk upright in pursuit of their careers and give the world a favorable image of Mormonism.

The letters are bulletins from Zion, the father informing his sons of events at first hand before they could read about them in the *Deseret News*, which the father faithfully had follow them wherever they went: news about crops, mining, new settlements, politics, elections, improvements in the city (gaslight in the Salt Lake Theater, a steam engine to hoist stone for the temple, a new building for Z.C.M.I.). They are, in this respect, a back door to the events familiar enough in Utah and Mormon history but now with intimate detail from the chief protagonist.

So the letters have a documentary interest, moving easily from family news (a birthday dinner) to public event. But though they often deal with domestic matters, there is little revelation of the private man, no play of mind such as we get, for instance, in the Adams-Jefferson correspondence. The letters have to be put into the right company to be appreciated. Brigham Young was not a letter writer on the order of Chesterfield or Henry James or Justice Holmes. Part news despatch, his letters are also part homily, lapsing readily into cant when he admonishes his sons to live the gospel, but taking on individual color when he describes an event in folksy metaphor, as when he tells about the Methodist camp meeting in the city he urged the Saints and his own family to attend, certain they would appreciate their own preaching the more: "The affair," wrote Brigham, "is very dry. Mr. Boole who preached on that occasion put me in mind of an old, dried-up wooden pump, laboring and creaking in a dry well, working very hard but producing no water." Such passages are disappointingly few; too often the letters suffer from the formal correctness we suspect may be blamed on Brigham's clerks to whom he dictated and whom he directed on occasion to give his boys the news from home and admonish them to behave. The text treats us to a facsimile of a postscript in Brigham's own hand to a letter addressed to his eldest son, Joseph Angell, in 1854, and a literal transcript of a letter in 1855 as Brigham wrote it. He was no speller, but his own language provides a refreshing contrast to that of the clerks. We may be sure the directness, the simplicity, the practicality, the homeliness and the humor are always Brigham's, as opposed to whole paragraphs of both the news and the moralizing often duplicated in letters written within a day or two of each other.

It is not duplication so much as the institutionalized personality dictating the letters that makes them sound interminably alike—they could have been written to one son as well as another and at any time. The value to history is the same, but the human interest is considerably diminished. *My Dear Son* calls for a companion volume of the letters from Brigham's wives, the mothers of these stalwart sons; they are, without doubt, more personal, more sensitive, more ultimately revealing. Writing about the marriage of his son Oscar Brigham in 1876, the father tells

Alfales, away in Michigan studying law, "I presume I need say no more on this point; it is quite possible you are acquainted with her [the "favored young lady"] and have been fully posted by your mother." We would like to enter that world of the wives and mothers, about whom the letters and the introductions are so silent. Brigham Young's male chauvinism, to be sure, was unconscious; he took for granted it was the divine order. His letters report a man's world, leaving it to the wives to report on woman's place.

Brigham Young took pride in his sons and established a manly relationship with them. They treated him with respect. They asked for money, but with diffidence, and always gave a good account of their stewardship. "Amongst the pleasures of my life at the present time," he wrote in 1875, two years before his death, "is the thought that so many of my sons are acquiring experimental and practical knowledge that will fit them for lives of great usefulness. . . . All true science," he was confident, "is the true knowledge of God and God's works," and he never questioned but that in pursuit of their careers (in business, in law, in engineering, in military service, in architecture) his sons would come to the same conclusion.

My Dear Son is an important event in the history of Mormon publication. We look forward to succeeding volumes in the Heritage Series, hopefully among them a complementary selection of the letters of the wives and mothers.

Close To The Bone

R. A. CHRISTMAS

Fresh Meat/Warm Weather. By Joyce Eliason. Harper & Row, New York, 1974. 145 pp. \$6.95.

It's nice to know there was something to talk about in Manti last winter. I'm referring to Joyce Eliason's *Fresh Meat/Warm Weather*, a confessional autobiography disguised as a first novel, which has a lot to say about growing up absurd in Southern Utah. Published by Harper & Row in the fall, *Fresh Meat/Warm Weather* has been getting favorable reviews around the country. (It was eighth on the best-seller list in Southern California last spring.)

Although Manti is not mentioned by name, the setting is unmistakable, and I can just imagine how the book must be arching some of the local eyebrows. Joyce Eliason lays bare the wound, cutting so close to the bone that I'm sure there are some who can feel the scraping of her knife. (I predict a meeting in hushed tones at the Manti library, perhaps a couple of letters in the city paper—like a garnish on top of two hundred tons of gossip. Note: the four-letter words are enough to keep the book out of town, if anyone wants to press the issue.)

Fresh Meat/Warm Weather is the story of a perplexing Mormon childhood, two failed marriages, a failed career (as an actress), and, in sum, a failed personality. It is also, for better or worse, the Mormon "woman's movement" novel ("Is it easier to be black and Jewish than a woman and a Mormon?"—Sammy Davis, where are you when we really need you?). The book will undoubtedly provide some solace to those long-ignored "Jill" Mormons whose hearts have been broken by the world but who still have enough good sense to reject the *Fascinating Woman* solution.