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Of the Seventy

PREPARED

AGAINST THE DAY OF BATTLE

*May we, by placing our trust in the Savior, the Lord of Hosts,
be prepared and not stumble on the field of battle.*

In 1485, Richard III was on the English throne. It was a time of instability, and Richard had to defend his crown more than once. But he was an experienced military veteran, a bold and shrewd warrior who had an army of between 8,000 and 10,000 men.

That same year, a pretender to the English throne, Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, challenged and confronted Richard in a place that gave the battle its name: Bosworth Field. Henry, unlike Richard, had little combat experience, and his forces numbered only 5,000. But at his side he had good advisers—noblemen who had taken part in similar battles, including some against Richard. The morning of the battle arrived, and everything suggested that Richard would be victorious.

A famous dramatic legend summarizes the events of August 22, 1485. That morning, King Richard and his men prepared to face Henry's army. The winner of the battle would be the ruler of England. Shortly before the battle, Richard sent a groom to see if his favorite horse was ready.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GREG NEWBOLD





“Shoe him quickly,” the groom ordered the blacksmith. “The king wishes to ride at the head of his troops.”

The blacksmith answered that he would have to wait. “I’ve shod the king’s whole army the last few days,” he said, “and now I’ve got to go get more iron.”

The impatient groom said he couldn’t wait. “The king’s enemies are advancing right now, and we must meet them on the field,” he said. “Make do with what you have.”

As ordered, the blacksmith did the best he could, making four horseshoes from a bar of iron. After hammering out the shoes, he nailed three of them on the horse. When attempting to fasten the fourth shoe, however, he realized he did not have enough nails.

“I need one or two more nails, and it will take some time to hammer them out,” he told the groom.

The groom, however, could wait no longer. “I hear the trumpets now,” he declared. “Can’t you just use what you’ve got?”

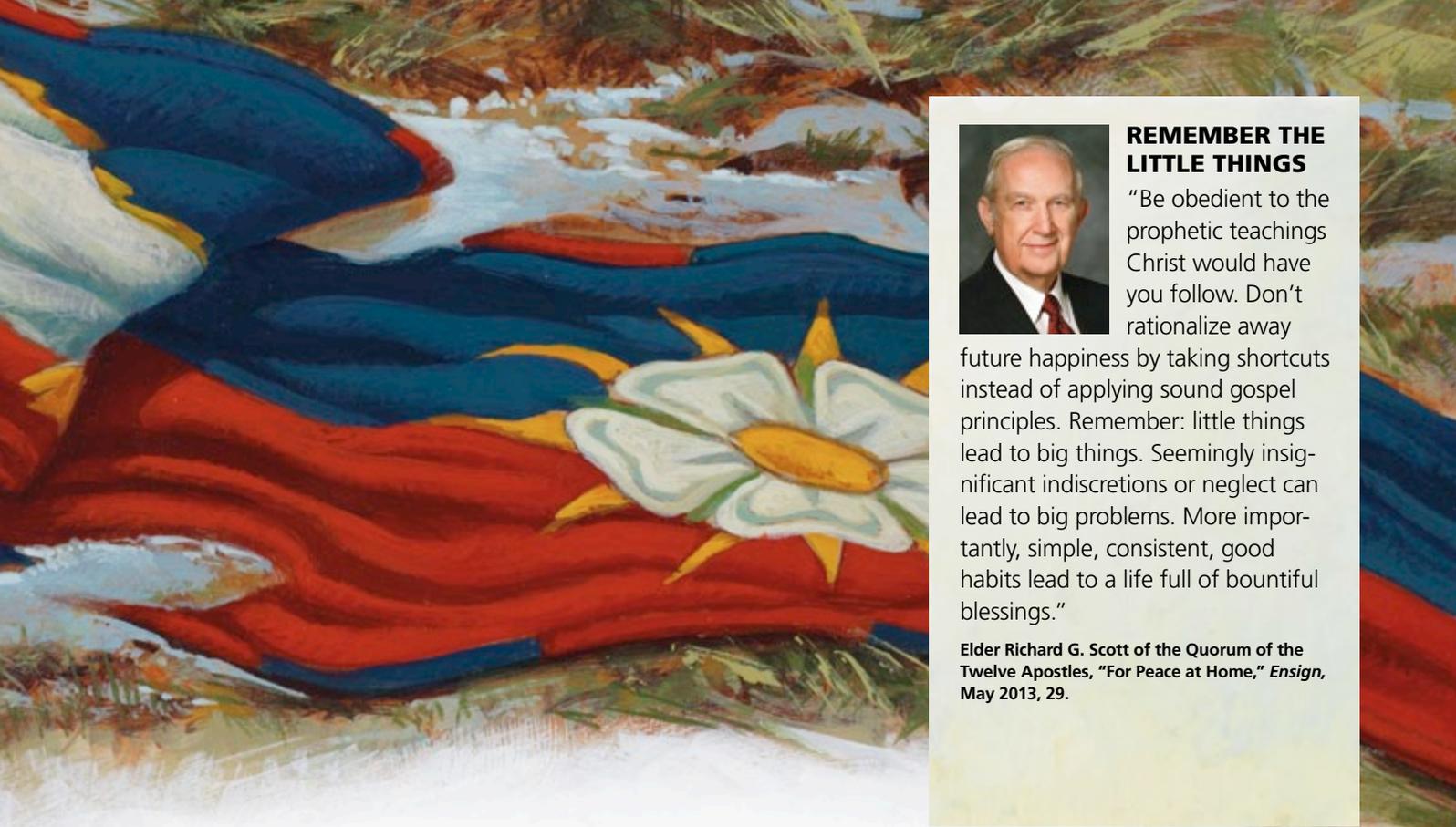
The blacksmith replied that he would do his best but that he couldn’t guarantee that the fourth horseshoe would hold.

“Just nail it on,” the groom ordered. “And hurry, or King Richard will be angry with us both.”

The battle soon commenced. To rally his men, Richard rode up and down the field, fighting and urging them with the call, “Press forward! Press forward!”

As Richard looked across the field, however, he saw some of his men falling back. Fearing that his other soldiers might also begin retreating, he galloped toward the broken line to spur them on. But before Richard could reach them, his horse stumbled and fell, throwing the king to the ground. One of the horse’s shoes, just as the blacksmith feared, had flown off during the king’s desperate gallop.

Richard jumped from the ground as his horse rose and galloped off. As Henry’s army advanced, Richard waved his sword high in the air, shouting, “A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!”



REMEMBER THE LITTLE THINGS

“Be obedient to the prophetic teachings Christ would have you follow. Don’t rationalize away

future happiness by taking shortcuts instead of applying sound gospel principles. Remember: little things lead to big things. Seemingly insignificant indiscretions or neglect can lead to big problems. More importantly, simple, consistent, good habits lead to a life full of bountiful blessings.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “For Peace at Home,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 29.

But it was too late. By then, Richard’s men were fleeing in fear of Henry’s advancing army, and the battle was lost. Since that time people have uttered the proverb:

*For want of a nail, a shoe was lost,
For want of a shoe, a horse was lost,
For want of a horse, a battle was lost,
For want of a battle, a kingdom was lost,
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.*¹

Fastening Our Principles

As I think of this story, I reflect on how something as simple as a poorly fastened horseshoe nail led to such a turn of events. We can compare the missing nail to the principles of the gospel. A lack of gospel principles and their associated values and practices can leave us helpless on the field of battle against temptation and evil.

What practices are missing in our lives and families? Are we neglecting personal or family prayer? Diligent study of the scriptures? Regular family home evening? Payment of a full tithing? Service to our brothers and sisters? Sabbath day observance? Temple worship? Love for our neighbors?

Each of us can take a look inside and find what we may lack—which principle or practice we need to *fasten* more

firmly in our lives and in our families. Then, after we identify that principle or practice, we can act with diligence and determination to *tighten the nail*—to live that principle more fully and to better prepare ourselves and our families to stand up for what’s right.

In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord counsels, “Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of my Spirit, which I will pour out upon you, and my word which I reveal unto you, and . . . be faithful until I come” (27:18).

To His faithful servants, the Savior has promised, “Their arm shall be my arm, and I will be their shield and their buckler; and I will gird up their loins, and they shall fight manfully for me; . . . and by the fire of mine indignation will I preserve them” (D&C 35:14).

May we remember that even if “the horse is prepared against the day of battle,” as Proverbs says, “safety is of the Lord” (21:31). May we follow Moroni’s invitation to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32). And may we, by placing our trust in the Savior, the Lord of Hosts, be prepared and not stumble on the field of battle against evil. ■

NOTE

1. See “For Want of a Horseshoe Nail,” in William J. Bennett, ed., *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* (1993), 198–200.