

Correspondence.

DEATH OF JOHN WHITMER.

Testimony to the Book of Mormon.

The following letter contains several items that will prove interesting to the Latter-day Saints. We publish it without knowing anything personally of the incidents related by the writer. The testimony of John Whitmer, however, is prefixed to the Book of Mormon in connection with that of the other witnesses, and remains unimpeached and unimpeachable.

OVID CITY, Idaho,

July 31, 1878.

Editors Deseret News:

I received, to-day, a letter from Miss Sarah Whitmer, at Far West, Missouri, in which she informs me about the death of her father, John Whitmer, Esq., one of the eight witnesses to the plates from which the Book of Mormon is translated. She writes:

"I seat myself to a painful task, this morning to inform you of the death of my dear father, who departed earthlife, the 11th day of this month (July). Father's disease was congestion of the lungs, heart and stomach. He died very easy. I have the great consolation in knowing that he was prepared to meet his God.

"He asked only a few days before his death when I thought you would come. He always felt so very anxious only to see you again.

"I visited Richmond directly after the storm, and it was a sad-looking sight to behold. Uncle David (David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses,) has about recovered from his injuries, and is out once more on the street."

So far from Sarah Whitmer's letter. I visited this last one of the eight witnesses in April this year, at his fine residence at Far West. On John's farm is located the foundation of Far West Temple, and the cornerstone is laid of gray sandstone. A short distance from John Whitmer's residence we discover the house in which the Prophet Joseph Smith dwelt with his family, and in the adjoining county is the beautiful valley, Adam-ondi-Ahman. John Whitmer received me as a dear father would receive a son, and answered readily all my questions. I said: I am aware that your name is affixed to the testimony in the Book of Mormon, that you saw the plates?

He—It is so, and that testimony is true.

I—Did you handle the plates with your hands?

He—I did so!

I—Then they were a material substance?

He—Yes, as material as anything can be.

I—They were heavy to lift?

He—Yes, and as you know gold is a heavy metal, they were very heavy.

I—How big were the leaves?

He—So far as I recollect, 8 by 6 or 7 inches.

I—Were the leaves thick?

He—Yes, just so thick, that characters could be engraven on both sides.

I—How were the leaves joined together?

He—In three rings, each one in the shape of a D with the straight line towards the centre.

I—In what place did you see the plates.

He—In Joseph Smith's house; he had them there.

I—Did you see them covered with a cloth?

He—No. He handed them uncovered into our hands, and we turned the leaves sufficient to satisfy us.

I—Were you all eight witnesses present at the same time?

He—No. At that time Joseph showed the plates to us, we were four persons, present in the room, and at another time he showed them to four persons more.

John Whitmer was about 77 years of age. He told me that he should not live and see the coming of Christ nor the restoration of Zion in Jackson County, Mo. That Joseph Smith gave him once the following blessing:

"Thou shall live to good old age, and shall walk over the ashes of all thy enemies. Then you shall sleep with your fathers, and meet the Lord, when he cometh in the clouds."

Now, said John Whitmer, I have lived to a good old age, and I have walked over the ashes of every single one of all my enemies.

We say farewell to one of those who wrote part of the Book of Mormon from the dictation of the Prophet's voice and one of the eight witnesses. He was firm as a rock in his faith, and when Joseph Smith, living in Plano, sent word to John Whitmer to reaffirm his testimony, his answer was: "I have never recalled it, and I have nothing to reaffirm."

In regard to joining the Church, he said: "I have a testimony within me, that testimony I got when I was raised up as a witness—that testimony has never left my bosom, it is by me to this day, and I am in the very place where I have to be, according to the Book of Mormon, which is the law that came out from Zion, which center stake is never to be taken away from here, in Jackson County, Mo." He had a firm and most absolute faith in the restoration and triumph of Zion on this continent, and the building of temples in Independence and Far West, Mo.

John Whitmer was in possession of copies from the plates, with the translation below, and showed that to me, and also of other valuable records. I shall correspond with Sarah Whitmer, and hope she will be willing, with the permission of David Whitmer, to restore those documents to the Church.

Yours truly,

P. WILHELM POULSON, M. D.