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BOOK OF MORMON IMPRESSIONS.

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I have just finished reading the first few pages of the Book of Mormon. I have read this record a number of times; but my impressions are stronger than before, and while I realize that much has already been written upon this subject, if you have room in the Journal for this article, I desire to write my impressions received while reading these few pages.

To one who is sincerely desirous to know whether "Mormonism" be the true gospel of Christ or not, the problem readily resolves itself into the form of a question—"Is the Book of Mormon true or false?" Or to make the premises more specific—"Did Joseph Smith actually get those plates from the hill Cumorah, or is the Book of Mormon a novel written from his own imagination?" Let us first consider the intellectual status of Mr. Smith at the time of the publication of this record, and then proceed with the reading of the same.

Joseph Smith was born in Sharon, Windsor county, Vermont, December 23, 1805. His father and mother were ordinary New England farmers, descendants of the Pilgrims, and the boy spent most of his early life on a farm. At the time this work was published to the world in the early spring of 1830, he was a young man of twenty-five and had received no scholastic training whatever. So in reading this record, if you are impressed by the setting of the story, or thoughts

brought forth as being the fruits of a brain well stored with facts or literary genius, you cannot ascribe this to Mr. Smith's signal ability along these lines, for he had not received so much as a common school education. The setting of the story commences by bringing in a period of Jewish history six hundred years before Christ, just prior to the time when Jerusalem was destroyed and when the Jews were taken captive into Babylon. Now, for the sake of the argument, we will choose the hypothesis that Joseph Smith wrote the book, either from the Solomon Spaulding story, his own imagination, or from some other source.

Unlike most writers of fiction Mr. Smith has chosen a setting that is based upon cold facts, and harmonizes with the twenty-fifth chapter of 2 Kings and the thirty-fifth chapter of 2 Chronicles in such a corroborative manner as to almost convince any one in the beginning that it is true. I can say right here in passing, that it is very doubtful in my mind whether Mr. Smith had ever given much attention to the destruction of Jerusalem prior to this time.

Before we have finished the first chapter we are brought face to face with a very serious problem, which few men dare to trifle with. Mr. Smith is at once preparing himself for damnation or exaltation by bringing the Lord into this story. He has Him appearing unto Lehi in a vision, and later on to Lehi and Nephi in visions and dreams. He brings an angel to the rescue of Nephi when his elder brethren threaten his life. He makes mention of the whisperings of the Holy

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Editorial

WEIGHT OF THE PLATES.

Why must some element of downright falsehood, or at least of misrepresentation, be injected into every argument advanced by opposers of the Book of Mormon? Why do they never base their arguments on pure facts or truths? Because one truth can never be made to clash with another. An apostate "Mormon" named Hyde published, about fifty years ago, more or less, a book in opposition to the religi-

ous faith of the Latter-day Saints, of which he had formerly been a zealous advocate and defender. In this book he used a pretended scientific argument going to show that the volume of plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated was so heavy that a man could not carry them a distance of two miles and repel assailants on the way, as the Prophet Joseph Smith states that he did. One F. M. McHale, in the Christian Standard, plagiarizes Hyde's argument thus:

In Cannon's "Life of Joseph Smith," page 49, we find a description of the golden plates. They were of gold, in sheets slightly less in thickness than sheets of tin, the book being eight inches long, six inches thick and six inches wide, bound together by three rings running through the edges of the plates; about one-third of the volume was sealed. Now let us examine this wonderful book as a commodity. Multiply the thickness, length and width of the book, and you have 288 cubic inches of solid gold, or one-sixth of a cubic foot. A cubic foot of water weighs sixty-two and one-half pounds. The specific gravity of gold is 19.3; that is to say, gold weighs nineteen and three-tenths times its bulk of water. This would mean that a cubic foot of gold weighs 1,206.25 pounds. One-sixth of a cubic foot, or the dimensions of the Mormon plates, would weigh the neat little sum of 201.04 pounds. Three pounds more than a barrel of beef. Five pounds more than a barrel of flour! Yet, we are asked to believe that Joseph Smith "clasped this treasure to his bosom" after lifting it out of its hiding place. It would appeal to any candid man that this would stamp the whole story with its proper name—falsehood.

This argument is old and has been revamped we don't know how many times. Few of those who use it are honest enough to credit it to the first man who published it, Hyde. It is so dishonest that an honest man would not use it; hence Hyde don't get the credit (?) he deserves. Stale, flat and dishonest as it is, this argument bears as close a resemblance to a scientific objection to the Book of Mormon as the present writer remembers ever to have seen.

And as a scientific objection let us

examine it. The reader will please remember that we are now in the domain of physical science, and are dealing with its demonstrated truths and laws, with which our opinions and conclusions must square or be cast aside. While we believe God to be a God of miracles we are to say nothing about them. We will not question the figures and process by which Mr. McHale reaches the conclusion that a solid block of gold having the dimensions of the volume of plates, as given by him would weigh 201.04 pounds. Up to this point we do not care to raise any issue with him. Yes, a solid block of gold of that size would weigh more than a barrel of beef; it would also weigh ten times as much as a feather bed of twenty pounds. What has a feather bed to do with the case? Exactly as much as a barrel of beef. The reader is requested to accept all these as facts of physical science.

But will a pile of thin metallic plates weigh as much as a solid mass of the same metal, dimensions being equal? Mr. McHale coolly assumes that the plates will weigh as much as the mass, and though he knows this assumption to be not only false but absurd, he builds upon it his whole argument. If the plates were as smooth and flat as tin sheets ordinarily are, and were not under pressure, they would be lighter by a considerable percentage than a solid mass. If each plate had had a considerable portion of its bulk cut away in the process of being engraved on both sides, the difference in weight would be that much greater.

But let us come to features of the subject that can be discussed with mathematical exactness, seeing that we are considering a purely scientific proposition. A thin metallic sheet, which, in a process of handling and engraving,

has been bent, wrinkled, or buckled so that these irregularities equal its thickness, will, when lying in a pile, occupy double the vertical space it would occupy were it a perfect plane; if these irregularities equal twice the thickness, the plate will occupy three times the space, etc. The plates of the Book of Mormon were very thin, thinner than common tin, and being of pure gold were easily wrinkled and indented; and it is not at all unreasonable to suppose that the deviations in their surfaces would average three times their actual thickness. In that case they would weigh not more than fifty pounds. We cannot in reason put this average at less than twice the thickness of the plates, and in that case they would weigh not exceeding sixty-five pounds.

Thus by a process of scientific reasoning based on physical facts within the common knowledge of all persons who have ever handled thin plates made of any kind of metal, and especially of gold, we reach the conclusion that the Book of Mormon plates probably weighed not far from fifty pounds, and not to exceed sixty-five pounds. To recapitulate, discarding fractions: Weight of a mass of gold the size of the volume of plates, 201 pounds. Deducting two-thirds because of increased bulk of plates due to bending, wrinkling, etc., 134 pounds, leaves 67 pounds; deducting 6 per cent loss due to cutting away in engraving, a very low estimate, say 4 pounds, leaves 63 pounds as the weight of the plates. If we assume that the bulk of the plates was increased four fold in consequence of bending, wrinkling, etc., an estimate which, as shown above, is very reasonable, we have the weight of the plates as being less than 50 pounds.

Joseph Smith the prophet was a man

of splendid physique and great physical strength, and it was no trick at all for him to walk miles with a weight of 50 or even 65 pounds under his arm. So much for this argument based on physical science, first published by an apostate "Mormon." When will our opponents learn the danger of depending upon arguments obtained from such a source?

Laying aside physical science, the Book of Mormon purports to be a miracle. Mr. McHale proposes to prove that it is not a miracle by attempting to show that a second and infinitely smaller miracle in its interest could not have happened. We have forgotten by what term logicians designate this sort of reasoning, but it is equivalent to unmitigated foolishness.

PIONEER DAY.

Many years ago the legislature of the state of Utah made the twenty-fourth of July a legal holiday. The reason why they did this was because it was the anniversary of the day on which the band of Mormon Pioneers led by Brigham Young in person, first entered Salt Lake valley. The story of that expedition abounds in all the elements that go to make up a great movement in human history; and it is right that the day on which it culminated should be observed as a holiday in the commonwealth immediately concerned.

While the day is the birthday of Utah, it has a vastly wider significance. It is the day on which began the fulfillment of some of the mightiest prophecies recorded in the holy scriptures, some of the greatest visions ever beheld by the seers of ancient times, to whom the God of heaven revealed chapters in the history of the human race ages before they came to pass.

"Zion, thou that bringest glad tidings, get thee up into a high mountain." said the sublime prophet Isaiah. Again:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it.

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plow shares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Micah foretells the same great events, the establishment of the kingdom of God in the mountains; and he moreover describes, with pathetic eloquence, what should befall the people who should do this before they should do it. He vividly foretold, in his fourth chapter, much of the history of the Latter-day Saints. So did David, king, warrior, poet, prophet. In the 107th psalm he tells of a people who should be gathered from many lands and directions, and should wander in a solitary wilderness; hungry and thirsty their souls should faint within them; but they should cry unto the Lord in their troubles, and He should deliver them out of their distresses. Dry ground should be turned into water springs, the desert into a fruitful field, and there God should make the hungry to dwell and prepare a city for habitation, and sow fields and plant vineyards. There they should be greatly multiplied.

The establishment of this people in a mountainous desert was an event that should be preparatory to universal peace among all nations, when swords should be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks, and men