



Type: Book Chapter

Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon—The Egyptian Language—Foreign Versions in Royal Palaces

Author(s): Janne M. Sjödahl

Source: *An Introduction to the Study of the Book of Mormon*

Published: Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1927

Pages: 1–33

Abstract: No abstract available.

An Introduction to the Study of the Book of Mormon

CHAPTER ONE

COMING FORTH OF THE BOOK OF MORMON—THE EGYPTIAN LANGUAGE—FOREIGN VERSIONS IN ROYAL PALACES.

ON SEPTEMBER 22, 1827, the original plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated were delivered to Joseph Smith, by the Angel Moroni, the resurrected being whom God had given charge of that marvelous literary production.

Golden Plates. Those plates had the appearance of gold, and are generally called "golden plates." They were about eight inches in length and seven inches in width. Fastened together with three rings, they formed a volume about six inches thick. Each plate was somewhat thinner than common tin, and had characters on both sides. These were small, Egyptian letters, or glyphs. The workmanship¹ appeared to be very beautiful.

Partly Sealed. Part of the volume,² Orson Pratt says two-thirds—was sealed. That part, we are told, contained an account of those great things, which were shown to the brother of Jared (Ether 3:25-28), and also the revelations given to John, the beloved,

¹Orson Pratt, *Remarkable Vision*, p. 6.

²*Jour. of Dis.*, Vol. 3, p. 347.

on Patmos.³ The promise is given that "when the people of the Lord are prepared and found worthy, the sealed portion will be unfolded unto them."

Where Deposited. The plates had been deposited in a pit excavated for that purpose on the west side of the hill Cumorah. A stone slab, the upper surface of which was perfectly smooth, formed the floor of the pit. Around this stone four other slabs had been set on edge in some kind of cement. Another flat stone formed the lid. The plates rested on stones, or small pillars of cement, on the floor. With the plates had been deposited the sacred instrument of ancient seers, known as the urim and thummim, two transparent stones set in silver bows and fastened to a "breastplate."

Indians Buried Treasures. It appears that it was not uncommon among Indians anciently to bury valuables in pits somewhat similar to this. All over the Pacific slope of the province of Chiriqui, Panama, there are ancient cemeteries in which objects of stone, clay and metal are found. The graves are either oval or quadrangular in form, ranging from a few feet to eighteen feet in depth. The flat stones which cover the cyst are often ten or fifteen feet below the surface, and are in some cases very heavy, weighing three hundred pounds or more. One may judge the value of the deposits in these pits in Central America from the statement that from one cemetery alone, covering an area of twelve acres, objects worth \$50,000 were collected by the discoverers. Many of these objects were made of gold more or less alloyed with copper.

³Letter by Oliver Cowdery in *Messenger and Advocate*, Feb., 1835; *Mill. Star*, Vol. 1, p. 44.

The Breastplate. Oliver Cowdery has conveyed the idea that the breastplate was a shield, such as warriors used in combat for the protection of their chests,⁴ but the prophet Joseph tells us that the urim and thummim was fastened to the breastplate; that, in fact, it was part of it; it could, therefore, hardly have been a portion of a soldier's military equipment.

A detailed description of the breastplate of the high priest of the Hebrew congregation is found in Ex. 28:15-30. It was a little bag, or pocket, made of fine linen and ornamented with embroidery in gold, blue, purple, and scarlet. It was set with twelve precious stones, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel, and was fastened to the ephod with gold chains. The high priest carried the sacred instrument, when not in use, in that receptacle. The brother of Jared deposited the urim and thummim, also called the interpreters, that had been given to him with his writings, as he was commanded to do.⁵

Urim and Thummim. From the Old Testament we can not gather detailed information concerning this instrument. The words are supposed to mean "lights and perfections." Aaron carried it whenever he appeared before the Lord in behalf of the people. (Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8.) From the blessing Moses pronounced upon Levi (Deut. 33:8-11), it is evident that it was part of the equipment of one whose special office it was to teach the people "the judgments" and "the law." In the days of Saul, the urim and thummim was still in existence. Samuel had, evidently, received revelations from the Lord by means

⁴*Hist. of the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 12.

⁵Ether 3:23.

of it, but after the death of that prophet, the Lord refused to answer the questions of the king. (1 Sam. 28: 3-6.) Among the captives who returned from Babylon with Ezra there were several hundred who had lost their genealogical records and were unable to prove their claim to a standing among the people. They were permitted to dwell with the rest but not to enjoy the privileges of the priesthood, "till there stood up a priest with urim and thummim," who, we may suppose, could declare the will of the Lord concerning them. (Ezra 2:59-63; Neh. 7:65.) From which it appears that the instrument at this time was lost, but that the prophets of the Lord expected that it would be restored, some time.

In the Book of Mormon the urim and thummim is called the "interpreters." The Lord gave the two stones to the brother of Jared and commanded him to seal them up with his writings. (Ether 3:21-28.) Mosiah had such an instrument. (Omni 20; Mosiah 8:13, 19.) He handed it to Alma (Mos. 28:20), and Alma to Helaman. (Alma 37:20-25.) Finally, Moroni sealed it up with his writings. (Ether 4:5.) From Doc. and Cov. 17:1, we learn that the urim and thummim which came into the possession of the Prophet Joseph was the very instrument which God had given to the Brother of Jared upon the mount.

The original Hebrew text of I Sam. 14:41 is supposed to have read: "And Saul said, O Jehovah, the God of Israel, why hast thou not answered thy servant this day? If the iniquity be in me, or in Jonathan my son, give *urim*; and if it be in thy people Israel, give *thummim*." (Cambridge Bible, notes under Ex.

p. 314.) This shows that the servants of the Lord anciently inquired of the Lord through urim and thummim.

The Hill Cumorah.

“The hill Cumorah is situated in western New York, between the villages of Palmyra and Canandaigua, about four miles from the former. It is celebrated as the ancient depository of the sacred gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. Cumorah was the name by which the hill was designated in the days of the prophet Moroni, who deposited the plates about 420 years after the birth of Christ. The prophet Mormon, the father of Moroni, had been entrusted with all the sacred records of his forefathers, engraved on metallic plates. New plates were made by Mormon on which he wrote, from the more ancient books, an abridged history of the nation, incorporating therewith many revelations, prophecies, the gospel, etc.

“These new plates were given to Moroni to finish the history, and all the ancient plates Mormon deposited in Cumorah, about 384 years after Christ. When Moroni, about thirty-six years after, made the deposit of the book entrusted to him, he was, without doubt, inspired to select a department of the hill separate from the great, sacred depository of the numerous volumes hid up by his father. The particular place in the hill, where Moroni secreted the book, was revealed by the angel to the Prophet Joseph Smith, to whom the volume was delivered in September, 1827. But the grand depository of all the numerous records of the ancient nations of the western continent, was located in another department of the hill, and its contents under the charge of holy angels, until the day should come for them to be transferred to the sacred temple of Zion.

“The hill Cumorah, with the surrounding vicinity, is distinguished as the great battle field on which two powerful nations were concentrated with all their forces, men, women, and children, and fought till hundreds of thousands on both

sides were hewn down and left to moulder upon the ground. Both armies were Israelites; both had become awfully corrupt, having apostatized from God. The Nephites, as a nation, became extinct; the Lamanites alone were left. This happened, according to their faithful records, near the close of the fourth century of the Christian era. The American Indians are remnants of the once powerful nation of Lamanites.

“The hill Cumorah is remarkable also as being the hill on which and around which a still more ancient nation perished, called Jaredites. This unparalleled destruction is recorded in the Book of Ether, and happened about six centuries before Christ. The Jaredites colonized America from the tower of Babel. After about sixteen centuries, during which they became exceedingly numerous, through their terrible wars they destroyed themselves. The hill Cumorah, by them, was called Ramah. Millions fought against millions, until the hill Ramah and the land round was soaked with blood, and their carcases were left in countless numbers to moulder back to Mother Earth.”—Orson Pratt, *Mill. Star*, Vol. 28, p. 417.

Oliver Cowdery, in his address to the Delaware Indians on the Book of Mormon, in 1831, said, in part: “This book * * * was hid in the earth by Moroni, in a hill called by him, Cumorah, which hill is now in the state of New York, near the village of Palmyra, in Ontario County.”—*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, p. 59.

Concerning the battles of Cumorah, Oliver Cowdery has left this statement:

“By turning to the 529th and 530th pages of the Book of Mormon, you will read Mormon’s account of the last great struggle of his people, as they were encamped round this hill Cumorah. In this valley fell the remaining strength and pride of a once powerful people, the Nephites—once so highly favored of the Lord, but at that time in darkness,

doomed to suffer extermination by the hand of their barbarous and uncivilized brethren. From the top of this hill, Mormon with a few others, after the battle, gazed with horror upon the mangled remains of those who, the day before, were filled with anxiety, hope, and doubt. A few had fled south, who were hunted down by the victorious party, and all who would not deny the Savior and his religion, were put to death. Mormon, himself, according to the record of his son Moroni, was also slain.”—*Messenger and Advocate*, July, 1835, p. 158.

Cumorah is Ramah. Oliver Cowdery, further says:

“This hill, by the Jaredites called *Ramah*: By it or around it, pitched the famous army of Coriantumr their tents. Coriantumr was the last king of the Jaredites. The opposing army were to the west, and in this same valley, and near by, from day to day, did that mighty race spill their blood in wrath, contending, as it were, brother against brother, and father against son. In this same spot, in full view from the top of this same hill, one may gaze with astonishment upon the ground which was twice covered with the dead and dying of our fellowmen.”—*Ibid.* p. 159.

It has been stated that there is no evidence near Cumorah of fierce battles in the past. That statement is completely answered in the following letter from Sister Susa Young Gates to the author:

“In 1901 Elder Claude Taylor and myself visited the Hill Cumorah and had an interview with Mr. and Mrs. Samson who then owned the Hill and the farm adjoining. Mr. Samson was the brother of Admiral Samson, but he was very prejudiced against the Mormon people. However, we spent some time talking with him.

“Outside the farmhouse Elder Taylor and myself noted several bushel baskets filled with arrow heads and I asked Mrs. Samson what they were. She said they had just begun to plow up the hill Cumorah and around the hill, to plant some crops, and they turned up these arrow heads by the basket full.

"I asked her what she did with them. She replied that she sold them to tourists who passed by. I inquired the price of them, and she replied, 'Twenty-five cents.' I purchased two and when I returned home I gave one to President Joseph F. Smith. The other one I have kept and it is still in my possession.

"This seems good evidence of the wars which have been fought around this historical hill."

David Whitmer Hears the Name Cumorah for the First Time. In the year 1887, David Whitmer told Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith the following incident:

"When I was returning to Fayette, with Joseph and Oliver, all of us riding in the wagon, Oliver and I on an old fashioned, wooden spring seat, and Joseph behind us—when traveling along in a clear, open space, a very pleasant, nice-looking, old man suddenly appeared by the side of the wagon, and saluted us with, 'Good morning, it is very warm,' at the same time wiping his face or forehead with his hand. We returned the salutation, and, by a sign from Joseph, I invited him to ride, if he was going our way. But he said very pleasantly, 'No, I am going to Cumorah.' This name was something new to me. I did not know what Cumorah meant. We all gazed at him and at each other, and as I looked around inquiringly at Joseph, the old man instantly disappeared, so that I did not see him again."

Whitmer described his appearance, and added:

"It was the messenger who had the plates [of the Book of Mormon], who had taken them from Joseph just prior to starting from Harmony."—Andrew Jenson, *Historical Record*, p. 209.

Copies Made. Whether we now have any genuine copies of the letters or characters on the Book of Mormon plates, is a question of some interest, although probably not important. During the time between December, 1827, and the following February, the Prophet Joseph, then living on his farm

near Harmony, Penn., copied a number of the characters, and translated a few of them by means of the interpreters. Consequently, when Martin Harris arrived in Harmony, in February, 1828, the Prophet had several specimens, two of which he gave to his newly-found friend, who, thereupon, proceeded to New York and submitted them to the inspection of Professor Charles Anthon, of the Columbia College. At the Church Historian's office, Salt Lake City, there is a photographic reproduction of a print which purports to contain a facsimile of one of the specimens which Martin Harris took to New York.⁷ It has no date and nothing to indicate its origin, but it is supposed to have existed in print in 1844, and it is known to have been in the possession of Hyrum Smith, the Patriarch. However, it states that Martin Harris carried the original to New York in 1827. But this date does not agree with that given by the Prophet, himself, in 1838.⁸ That, for one thing, would seem to militate against its acceptance, without strong evidence, as an authentic document. The letters do certainly not answer the description which Professor Anthon gave many years afterwards of the characters that he says Martin Harris submitted to him; but that is of no importance, since it may be supposed that after a number of years he may have forgotten all but the main fact, that a plain farmer visited him and exhibited a piece of paper with some strange letters.

Another facsimile, containing a greater num-

⁷*Essentials in Church History*, by Joseph Fielding Smith; p. 63.

⁸February, 1828, is the date given in the Pearl of Great Price, page 55, verse 63, new edition.

ber of characters than the print in the Church Historian's office, is reproduced in Elder B. H. Roberts' *Americana History of the Church*. A facsimile is also found in Elder George Reynolds' *Story of the Book of Mormon*.

Professor Anthon's Story. Professor Anthon, a few years after the interview with Martin Harris, repudiated the true story told by this gentleman, but in such a way as to throw doubt upon the reliability of his memory. The repudiation came in a letter to Mr. E. D. Howe, of Painesville, Ohio, dated New York, Feb. 17, 1834, and it was intended for an anti-Mormon publication. In this letter he is alleged to have said of the paper brought to him by Martin Harris:

"This paper, in question, was in part a singular scroll. It consisted of all kinds of crooked characters, disposed in columns, and had evidently been prepared by some person who had before him at the time a book containing various alphabets, Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes; Roman letters inverted or placed sideways, were arranged and placed in perpendicular columns and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle, divided into various compartments, decked with various, strange marks and evidently copied after the Mexican calendar, given by Humbolt, but copied in such a way as not to betray the source whence it was derived. I am thus particular as to the contents of the paper, inasmuch as I have frequently conversed with my friends on the subject since the Mormon excitement began, and well remember that the paper contained anything else but 'Egyptian hieroglyphics.'" (*Mormonism*, by N. W. Green, Hartford, 1870, page 426.)

The passage quoted is worded a little differently in *Mormonism Unveiled*, by E. D. Howe, p. 271:

"This paper was in fact a singular scrawl. It consisted of all kinds of crooked characters disposed in columns, and had evidently been prepared by some person who had before him at the time a book containing various alphabets. Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes, Roman letters inverted or placed sideways, were arranged in perpendicular columns," etc.

The two versions, as will be seen, agree in substance, if not in every particular.

We owe Professor Anthon a debt of gratitude for this minute description of the "scroll" he refers to. It proves, in the first place, that Martin Harris, in fact, had an interview with him; so there can be no doubt as to that. But it proves, in the second place, that the paper which the professor repudiates could not possibly have been the one submitted by the "plain farmer." Read the description again. Professor Anthon says the "singular scroll" had characters copied from Hebrew, Greek, Roman, etc., alphabets, by someone who had the book containing such alphabets before him. That lets the young boy, Joseph Smith, and his associates at that time out of the case; for neither of them had, at that time, any such literature before them. He says the characters were arranged in "perpendicular columns." That is evidently not the case in the published facsimiles. Finally, he says the whole ended in a rude delineation of Humbolt's reproduction of the Mexican calendar. That proves positively that the paper Professor Anthon is talking about is not the one Martin Harris exhibited. For neither Joseph nor any of his friends at that time was a student of Humbolt, and there is no picture, crude or otherwise, of the Mexican








(Aztec) calendar stone on the facsimiles of Book of Mormon characters, now extant in print, and they were, unquestionably, the kind of, if not the very identical, characters which Martin Harris had in his possession.



Is it possible that someone had perpetrated a hoax on the professor, and, under an assumed name, submitted a paper such as that described in the Howe letter, just to accommodate Mr. Howe? Or was Professor Anthon's memory so treacherous that it made him give a totally fictitious description of the paper Martin Harris presented? The latter of these alternatives is the more probable; the first is not altogether impossible.


Dr. Plongeon versus Professor Anthon. Dr. Augustus le Plongeon did not treat the characters with the contempt Professor Anthon seems to have felt. In a letter to Elder D. M. McAllister, Salt Lake City, dated 18 Sidney Place, Brooklyn, June 20, 1892, Dr. Augustus le Plongeon writes, in part:

"I have carefully examined the characters on the plates from which the Mormon book was translated.

"Although several resemble some on the old monuments and in the Maya codices, still the characters of the writings are in no way similar to that of the Maya inscriptions, or those on the tablets of Palenque. It seems to me they bear more similitude to the Old Phœnician. Still I am free to say that the following are found in the Maya writings:

“ (n),  , or  , or  , *ma* (Egyptian and Maya), ‘the land,’ ‘the country;’  (h) *Ab*, ‘the male,’ or ‘the powerful;’  or  (t), symbol of Maya *Tem*, altar, or Egyptian T.

“ This is the most significant. It is found in the Maya books,  , where it has the meaning of ‘The lands of the West;’ that is, North and South America, and the lost *Land of Mu* (Atlantis); indicated by the dot in the midst of the Ocean, contained within the shores of the Western continent from New Foundland and Capc St. Roque in Brazil.”

In a note, Dr. Plongeon adds that the compound sign,  , would in Maya glyphs mean “Ah-tem,” “He of the altar, either God, or the priest.”

There is no reason to believe that Professor Anthon knew a great deal about the Egyptian language or the literature of ancient America; but whatever may be said of Dr. Plongeon, he certainly must be recognized as a Maya scholar, and as such his criticism of the characters has considerable weight.

The Rosetta Stone which is the key to the Egyptian riddle, was found near Rosetta, by a French artillery officer called Boussard among some ruins in the year 1799. It contains a decree by Ptolemy V Epiphanes conferring benefits on the priesthood and the people, and it was written in hieroglyphs, demotic and Greek uncial characters. Many before that time had pretended to be able to read and interpret the Egyptian hieroglyphs and to translate texts, but their translations are mere nonsense. It was first in 1802 that Akerblad published an alphabet of the

demotic characters, and that was a good beginning to an understanding of the text. Young followed in 1818 with his alphabet. Champollion published his alphabet in 1822. Young identified the names of six gods and those of Ptolemy and Berenice. Champollion found the true key to the meaning, following the road laid by Akerblad and Young. Champollion's *Precis du Systeme Hieroglyphique* was published in 1824.

Egyptian. As has been stated, the letters on the plates were Egyptian. This must be inferred from the Book of Mormon itself. Nephi's statement (I Ne. 1: 2): "I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians," when read in connection with the explanatory note of Mormon (9:32): "And now, behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the *characters* which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech"—can only mean that the authors of the book used the Hebrew language written in Egyptian letters, modified to suit their purposes.⁶

Egyptian Characters. A word or two about the Egyptian characters should be of interest to the student of the Book of Mormon. The oldest Egyptian letters are pictures known as hieroglyphs. They were in use as far back as the second dynasty—some say four thousand years before our era. In this writing a circle represented the sun; a crescent, the moon;

⁶"This little colony brought with them from Jerusalem their ancient scriptures engraved in Egyptian characters, on brass plates."—Orson Pratt, in an article on the Book of Mormon, written in 1874 for the *Universal Cyclopaedia*. *Mill. Star*, Vol. 38, p. 692.

an oval, an egg; the pictures of a man and a woman, mankind, and so on. These hieroglyphs were also used symbolically. Thus the circle, representing the sun, could stand for a "day" and the crescent, representing the moon, for a "month." The picture of a pen and an inkstand would mean "to write," and the picture of a bee would mean "royalty," while that of a vulture would stand for "mother," and that of a certain species of serpent, for "God." Most of the hieroglyphs were used also as letters, representing elementary sounds. An eagle would represent an "a," a human leg and foot, "b," etc. However, the Egyptians were not satisfied with one sign for each letter; they had three pictures for "a," three for "b," four for "m," four for "t," etc. Altogether they must have had a thousand hieroglyphs in their alphabet of signs. They were sometimes written in vertical columns, but more often in horizontal lines, and were then read either from the left to right, as we read, or from right to left, as the Hebrews do. The figures were always facing the side from which the lines were to be read.

The Hieratic Alphabet. A thousand signs, were, of course, too much for practical purposes; consequently, in course of time a smaller number became more popular, as it were, than the rest, and they were used to denote vowel sounds or consonants. Their form gradually changed from the pictorial to the simpler, conventional. The picture of the eagle, for instance, became only a line bent to represent, or rather to suggest, the outline of the bird. Forty-five such simplified characters were gradually adopted, and they became known as the hieratic alphabet.

This system of writing is also very old. It is so old, in fact, that the most ancient hieratic characters, as has been asserted, were obsolete at the time of the Hebrew exodus from Egypt. They are known to present-day scholars chiefly from a manuscript in the National Library, Paris, called Papyrus Prisse, supposed to be one of the oldest books in existence. It was found in a tomb at Thebes.

Demotic Signs. The Egyptians also had a third system of writing, generally called the demotic. This has been traced as far back as 900 B. C., and must have been known in Egypt and neighboring countries at the time of the emigration of Lehi from Jerusalem. It was really reformed hieratic Egyptian, simplified for social and business purposes. Gradually it became popular, and it was necessary to write royal decrees, intended for the people, in demotic characters in addition to the hieratic or hieroglyphic, which were understood only by scholars. The famous Rosetta stone has an inscription in hieroglyphs, demotic and Greek letters.

Phönician Characters. Some time in the dim past, perhaps two thousand years before our era, Semitic scholars, probably Phönicians, feeling the need of simpler and more practical alphabetical signs than those in use in Egypt, picked out twenty-one of the old Egyptian hieratic characters, modified them, and renamed them. This, according to the French Egyptologist, Emmanuel de Rouge, was the origin of the oldest Semitic alphabet. It has been called the Phönician or Old Israelitic alphabet. As a matter of fact it was the Egyptian "reformed" and adapted to Semitic speech. The Law and most of the Prophets

were at one time written in those characters. Lehi, the scholarly ancestor of the Nephites and the Lamanites, undoubtedly was familiar with it. It was the alphabet, I have no doubt, on the brass plates of Laban, referred to as "the language of the Egyptians," (Mosiah 1:4), meaning, as explained, "the characters which are called among us reformed Egyptian." Nephi knew this system of writing, for he had been "taught somewhat in all the learning of his father" (I Nephi 1:1.) It would, therefore, be natural for him to make use of this Old Semitic alphabet as a foundation for the signs he needed for his record, modified so as to require but little space of the costly and ponderous material on which they were to be engraved.

In the Old World, too, the ancient Semitic alphabet was, in due time, superceded by the Aramean. This system of writing was adopted by the Hebrews after the Babylonian captivity, chiefly, as Jewish tradition avers, through the influence of Ezra. The square Hebrew letters now in use are the modern offspring of the Aramean ancestors.

In Egypt the hieratic letters gradually receded into oblivion, and the demotic or enchorian script became popular. At the time of Herodotus, about 450 B. C., only the hieroglyphic and the demotic characters were known outside the small circles of scholars.⁹ It appears, therefore, that Nephi in this part of the world took the same course as regards the reformation of the alphabet as that followed by the

⁹E. A. Wallis Budge, *A History of Egypt*, Vol. 6, p. 198. Scribners Bible Dictionary, under "Alphabet."

scholars of the Old World, as their literary taste and requirements developed.

Another Reformed Egyptian. According to a notice in the *Denver Jewish News* of May 22, 1924, Prof. Hubert Grimme of the Münster University, is said to have stated concerning the writing on a stone tablet found on Mt. Sinai, that it is done "in the manner of Egyptian hieroglyphics," but with a different type of script, probably used as a secret writing by the Hebrews, incomprehensible to the Egyptians. If the professor is correctly quoted, the reforming of Egyptian characters for special purposes was not an unknown procedure among the educated Jews, even long before the time of Lehi.

The Egyptian Language. The Egyptian language has been described as an "agglutinate, monosyllabic form of speech," presenting analogies both with Turanian and Semitic languages. The grammar is in many respects Semitic, and pronouns, prepositions, and other particles are traceable to Semitic roots. Pronominal suffixes are also used, as in Hebrew and cognate tongues.¹⁰ The relationship between Egyptian and Hebrew is freely recognized by scholars.¹¹ The strong indication of that relationship in the Book of Mormon, where it is taken for granted as a known fact, is an evidence of the authenticity of that volume of more than ordinary importance. Here, in the western world, however, through savage, de-

¹⁰George Rawlinson, *History of Egypt*, Vol. 1, pp. 57-67.

¹¹L'alphabet hieroglyphique, égyptien avait, dans sa constitution même, abstraction faite de l'absence de quelques sons, du nombre et de la forme matérielle des signes une ressemblance très-marquée avec l'alphabet hébreu.—*Précis du Systeme Hieroglyphique des anciens Égyptiens* par Champollion; Paris, 1824, p. 59.

Hieratic Phœnician

Handwritten hieratic and phœnician script, likely representing the title 'Book of Mormon'.

Characters

Handwritten characters and symbols, including letters like H, C, U, V, W, X, Y, Z and various pictographic symbols.

Book of Mormon

Medaeki Lodge

Wood

Carroa

Lodges

Tents

Lake

River

Come

Great Spirit

Indian Pictography

vastating warfare, progress was cut short, and deep darkness covered the land. In the crude pictographs of North and South America, in the remarkable glyphs of the Mayas and the Aztecs, and in the no less remarkable knotted cords of the Peruvians we see the efforts of descendants of the people prominent in Book-of-Mormon history, to rise again to former heights, of which vague and confused traditions gave faint and distorted pictures.

The specimens of letters on the preceding page illustrates the difference as well as similarity between Book of Mormon characters and the Hieratic and Phœnician letters. The hieratic letters are from Champollion's *Précis du Système Hiéroglyphique des anciens Égyptiens*. The Indian pictograph is from Ellen Russell Emerson's *Indian Myths*, p. 27. They are supposed to be an announcement of a religious service. There is a big tent and eight square figures. Then there is a figure representing a tree, followed by three tents from two of which curling smoke ascends, showing that they are inhabited. The next figure represents a lake, and the next a river. The third line begins with a canoe. Then comes a pair of feet, meaning to come by land, as the canoe means to come by water. The last figure stands for the Great Spirit, as the Egyptian circle for the sun god Ra. The interpretation is, then: "Hark to the words of Sagemah. The great medicine lodge will be open in eight days. Ye who live in the woods or near the lake and river, come in your canoes or by land to worship the Great Spirit."

Joseph's Training for Translation. When the Prophet Joseph received the plates, Sept. 22, 1827, he was well prepared for the—from a human point of view—extraordinarily difficult work of translation which had been entrusted to him. His special training for that duty began on Sept. 21, 1823, when the angel MORONI first visited him.

On the evening of that day, Joseph, after having retired, engaged, as was his wont, in fervent prayer. While thus occupied, the heavenly messenger, surrounded by light and clothed in a white, loose robe, called him by name and delivered his message.

He told Joseph of the gold plates and said they contained "an account of the former inhabitants of this continent and the source whence they sprang."¹² From a letter by Oliver Cowdery¹³ we learn that the angel "gave a general account of the promises made to the fathers and also a history of the aborigines of this country, and said they were literal descendants of Abraham. He represented them as once being an enlightened and intelligent people, possessing a correct knowledge of the gospel, and the plan of restoration and redemption."

The information imparted by the angel was not confined to the history contained in the sacred record. Moroni told Joseph of the everlasting gospel, as delivered in person by our Savior to the ancient inhabitants of America. He explained the use of the urim and thummim; he quoted the Old Testament on the coming of the Lord, on the restoration of the Priesthood, and salvation for the dead, as implied in the prophecy of Malachi. He spoke of the gathering of the "remnant," and of the Millennium, as predicted by Isaiah (chapter 11); of the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh, as foretold by Joel (2:28-32), and of the coming of our Lord, as explained by Peter (Acts 3:22-23.) Three times during the night did Moroni appear and again the following morning,

¹²Pearl of Great Price, p. 51, verse 34, new edition.

¹³Mess. and Adv., Vol. 1, p. 80.

and each time he repeated his message as first delivered, but, in each successive interview, he also added some new item of instruction, not previously given. Thus he imparted to the prophet the information that great judgments were about to come upon the earth, including, no doubt, the wars and other calamities the present generation has witnessed. He spoke of the temptations that Joseph would have to overcome, and warned him against yielding to selfish considerations. In other words, the angel outlined to the prophet the entire plan of salvation, as it was to be proclaimed to the world in our day. For four years, on each 22nd of September, the interviews were continued on the hill Cumorah. It was after such schooling that the Prophet Joseph received the plates and was prepared for the work of translation. The Prophet Joseph, consequently, had the teachings of Moroni and his account of the contents of the book, as the Spirit of God reminded him of these teachings from time to time, to go by in his translation. This is the special office of the Spirit, to remind the children of God of what they have been taught and to guide them into the path of truth. (John 14:26.) That seems to be a satisfactory solution of the problem of translation.

At the time the angel delivered the plates to Joseph Smith, some of those who afterwards joined the Church had a remarkable vision. President Heber C. Kimball, in a sermon in Salt Lake City, Nov. 26, 1854, related it as follows:

“President Young, myself, Brother Phineas Young, and many others saw it. We saw an army start from the east and

go to the south, and there were twelve men in a column, and one column came right after the other, so that when the first stepped, the next stepped in their track, and they had swords, guns, knapsacks, caps, and feathers, and we could see them march with a uniform step from one side of heaven to the other. This we saw with our natural eyes and looked upon it for hours. It was the very night that the angel delivered the plates to Joseph Smith. This army marched to the southwest, and they marched as if there was a battle to take place; and we could hear the clashing of their swords and guns, and the measured tread of their march, just as plain as I ever heard the movements of troops on the earth. John P. Greene came to wake me up, to look upon it."—*Jour. of Dis.*, Vol. 2, p. 161.

Heber C. Kimball was 26 years old when he had this vision. Four years later he joined the Church by baptism, April 16, 1832. Brigham Young was baptized, April 14, 1832.

The Lord gave these men an extraordinary testimony of the divinity of the work that was about to begin.

Martin Harris as Scribe. Martin Harris wrote the first 116 pages, at the dictation of the prophet. These were lost, through the almost criminal negligence of the scribe. The Lord then provided another amanuensis.

It may well be that the hand of the Lord was manifest in this incident, as in so many others that at first seemed inexplicable, for Martin Harris was, probably, not well enough educated to wield the pen in this great literary work. Another had already been prepared for that task.

Oliver Cowdery Arrives. On April 5, 1829, Oliver Cowdery arrived in the home of the Prophet Joseph, at Harmony, Pa., having undertaken that

journey for the purpose of obtaining information concerning the book, after having heard the marvelous story as related by members of the Smith family in Manchester. Two days after his arrival in Harmony the translation was resumed from the beginning of the plates, with Oliver as the scribe.¹⁴

Goes to the Whitmers. At the beginning of the month of June, 1829, the prophet Joseph received an invitation from the Whitmers, who lived at Fayette, Seneca Co., N. Y., to come and stay with them until the translation should be finished. The invitation was gratefully received. The work now proceeded rapidly. The translation was completed on the 1st of July, 1829,¹⁵ and the first edition, of three thousand copies, was printed at Palmyra, by Mr. F. B. Grandin. It was ready for distribution early in the year 1830.

Two identical manuscripts were made. One, written almost entirely by Oliver Cowdery, was the copy used by the printer.¹⁶ This, finally, came into the custody of David Whitmer, who prized it so highly that he refused to part with it on any condition. The other, the Prophet Joseph kept. It was deposited in one of the corner stones of the Nauvoo House, Oct. 2, 1841. Portions of it, unfortunately somewhat damaged by dampness, were carefully preserved

¹⁴It was while thus engaged, on May 15, 1829, that the Aaronic Priesthood was conferred upon them by John the Baptist, who also instructed them to baptize and ordain each other to that Priesthood. On the same occasion they were promised the Melchizedek Priesthood, which promise was fulfilled under the hands of Peter, James and John in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna Co., and Colesville, Broome Co., on the banks of the Susquehanna river, some time between May 15 and the end of June, 1829.—*History of the Church*, Vol. 1. pp. 40-1.

¹⁵David Whitmer, *Mill. Star*, Vol. 43, p. 421.

¹⁶*Hist. of the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 75.

by the late President Joseph F. Smith, after the exodus from Nauvoo.

Translations of the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is a message to "Jew and Gentile,"¹⁷ to "all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people."¹⁸ Consequently, as soon as missionary work was undertaken outside the English-speaking world, translations of the precious record were made.

The first foreign version published was the Danish. The translation was made by Elder P. O. Hansen and carefully revised by Elder Erastus Snow in 1850, and in 1851 two thousand copies were printed in Copenhagen. In 1852 a French version was published in Paris by Elder John Taylor; an Italian, by Elder Lorenzo Snow in London; a German, in Hamburg, by Elders John Taylor and G. Parker Dykes; and a Welsh, by Elder John Davies, at Myrthyr Tydfil. A Hawaiian translation was published in San Francisco, by Elder George Q. Cannon, in 1855. A Swedish version was published by August W. Carlson, in Copenhagen, 1878; a Spanish, under the direction of Elder Moses Thatcher, in Salt Lake City, 1886; a Maori, in Auckland, N. Z., 1889; a Dutch, by Elder J. W. F. Volker, in Amsterdam, 1890; a Samoan, in Salt Lake City, 1903; a Tahitian, at Salt Lake City, Utah, 1904; a Turkish, translated under the direction of Elder F. F. Hintze, in New York, 1906; and a Japanese, in Tokyo, 1909. A translation into Hebrew was completed in 1922, by Brother Henry Miller, Salt Lake City. This has not yet been published.

¹⁷See title page, Book of Mormon.

¹⁸Testimony of the witnesses.

כתבי מרמון.

ספר נפו א.

ממלכתו ואת כל מעשיו:

ספור להי ואשתו שרִיָה עם ארבעה בניו. שם הבכור לָמון.
והשני למואל השלישי שם והרביעי נפו: ד' צנה את-כִּהִי
לעזוב את אדמת ירושלים, כי ישיבִיה בקשו לקחת את נפשו
יָעַן אשר נבֵאָ לָהֶם והעיד בָּם את עונותיהם. ויסע משם דרך
שלוש ימים במדבר עם פֶּל בְּנֵי בֵיתוֹ. ונפו ואחיו שבו משם
ירושלִימָה לקחת את זכרונות בני ישראל. ספור כל צרותיו
ועניניו וקָחָיו לָהֶם בנות ישמעאל לְנָשִׁים. ואיך בָּלָם עם כל
משפחותיהם נסעו במדבר. היסורים אשר סבלו שם. ודרך
מסעיהם עד בואם לְמִים הַרְבִּים. אחי נפו מורדים בו. והוא
מכלים אותם ובוֹנֵה אֵינָה. וקָרָא לְמָקוֹם אֲדָמַת שִׁפְעָה. וְבֵאֵשֶׁר
עברו את רב המים וישעו את ארץ הבטחון. הפל כפי ספור
נפו. או בפירוש אנכי נפו כתבתי את הזכרונות האלה:

פרק א

אני נפו נולדתי אצל אבות נכבדים ולכן לקחתי שכם
אחד מרוב לקתי אבי וכאשר תונת רבות ראיתי בימי חסד
ד' נחה עלי כל ימי חיי. גם הרבתי דעת על הכשרון ועל כל
הנסתרות לד'. לכן ארשום זכרונות ימי אשר עברו עלי:
2. את הזכרונות אכתוב בשפת אבי, והיו לשון חכמי
מצרים וחכמי ישראלים:
3. ואנכי ידעתי כי הזכרונות האלה אמתים הם מפני
אשר נעשום בידי ובדעת רעיוני:
4. והי בראשית ממלכת צדקיהו מלך יהודה בשנת
אחת למלכותו (כל ימי מגורת להי אבי בירושלים היתה)

The first page of the Book of Mormon
translated into Hebrew

Sent to Kings and Rulers. On Jan. 19, 1841, the word of the Lord came to the Saints, instructing them to make the gospel known to kings, to the president-elect,¹⁹ and to all nations.²⁰ That revelation was read to the Saints at the general conference in Nauvoo, April 7, 1841.

In London. In 1842 the Book of Mormon was sent to the royal palace in London. Concerning this,

¹⁹Wm. H. Harrison, the ninth president of the United States, who was inaugurated March 4, 1841. The Prophet Joseph Smith says of Mr. Harrison: "We voted for General Harrison because we loved him. He was a gallant officer and a true friend."—Nauvoo, Ill., Dec. 29, 1841; *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 3, p. 651.

²⁰Doc. and Cov. Sec. 124:1-14.

the following paragraph appears in the biography of Lorenzo Snow, by Eliza R. Snow, p. 63:

“Before leaving London, Elder Lorenzo Snow presented to Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, and His Royal Highness, Prince Albert, through the politeness of Sir Henry Wheatley, two neatly bound copies of the Book of Mormon, which had been donated by President Brigham Young and left in the care of Elder Snow for that purpose.”

The date of the presentation is not given, but the event inspired a beautiful poem by the gifted sister of Elder Snow.

In Copenhagen. When the Danish version of the Book of Mormon appeared in Copenhagen, considerable excitement was aroused, followed by an agitation for government action against the Elders, notwithstanding the constitutional guarantee of religious liberty. Elder Erastus Snow, therefore, in 1851, sent a deputation to the king, Frederick VII, presenting him with a copy of the Book of Mormon and a newly printed tract. The book, it seems, came into the hands of the Queen Dowager, and, according to rumors that leaked out from the palace, she was so affected by the reading of it that her attendants became quite alarmed. The result was, however, that the government declined to interfere with the work of the Elders, and there was peace for some time in the beautiful Danish capital.²¹

In Berlin. Some time during the year 1852, King Frederic Wilhelm IV, of Prussia, instructed his minister in Washington to make inquiries concerning

²¹Letter from Erastus Snow to Brigham Young, Liverpool, July 10, 1851.

Mormonism. Mr. Bernhisel was Utah's delegate in Congress at that time, and he, undoubtedly, gave the Prussian ambassador the desired information. In addition, some literature was forwarded to the king from the Church office in Liverpool. At the general conference in Salt Lake City, Sept. 1, 1852, a deputation, consisting of Elders Orson Spencer and Jacob Houtz, was appointed to go to Berlin, and, if an audience could be obtained, to answer all questions on which further information might be sought for. The two Elders arrived in Berlin, and on Jan. 29, 1853, they addressed a communication to his excellency von Raumer, the state minister of ecclesiastical affairs, asking him respectfully to procure, if possible, an audience for them. Shortly afterwards they received an order from the prefect of police to appear before him on Feb. 1, and that was the only reply von Raumer ever condescended to give. At police headquarters the Elders were examined concerning their doctrine and practices. Then they were ordered to leave Prussia the next day and never to return,²² but in all probability the report of the proceedings at the police station was forwarded to the ecclesiastical department of the government, and from there to the king. The verdict of history on the administration of which King Frederic Wilhelm IV was the head is that, "Towards the end of his life the Prussian government was distrusted at home and discredited abroad."

In Stockholm. In the year 1897, Oscar II, then king of both Norway and Sweden, celebrated, with

²²Letter from Orson Spencer to Brigham Young, Liverpool, Feb. 8, 1853.

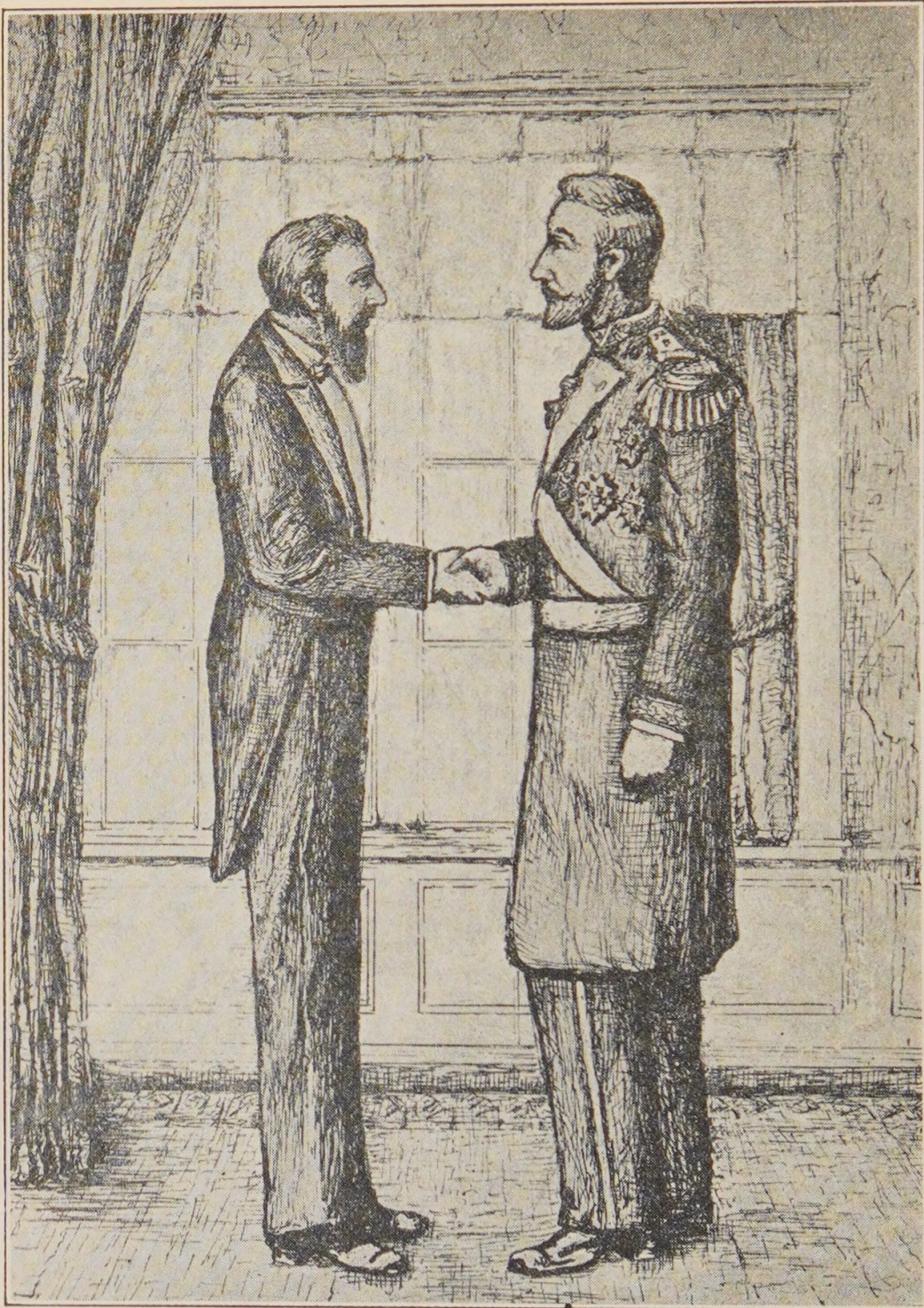
his beloved consort, Queen Sophia, the 25th anniversary of their accession to the thrones of the two kingdoms. That was a social event of which cognizance was taken throughout the civilized world, because of the popularity of that truly great Bernadotte. Scandinavians abroad and their descendants welcomed the occasion as one upon which to express, by congratulations and more or less costly tokens of remembrance, their well-wishes for the royal house. In Utah a number of men and women of Swedish and Norwegian descent decided to send their majesties, with their congratulations, a copy of the Book of Mormon in elegant binding, as an appropriate and characteristic present. A box of Utah onyx, to which was attached a gold plate with a suitable inscription, was made by Mr. Olof Nilsson, of Salt Lake City. In this beautiful receptacle the book was deposited on a bed of silk, made up of the Swedish and Norwegian colors.

When the unique present was ready for its long journey the First Presidency of the Church decided to send a special messenger to Stockholm to deliver it in person. That mission was entrusted to the writer. On my arrival in Stockholm, through the courtesy of Count von Rosen and Count von Essen, I obtained an audience with the King, in the palace, Sept. 22, 1897.

The following is from the official report of the Jubilee program for Sept. 22:

“After the delegation²³ had retired, his Majesty admitted

²³Refers to a delegation of Upsala students.



—Pen and ink sketch by author.

His Majesty, King Oscar II, receives Elder J. M. Sjödahl and accepts
a copy of the Book of Mormon, September 22, 1897.

Mr. J. M. Sjödahl, from Utah, who, on behalf of Swedes and Norwegians there residing, presented his Majesty a casket made of Onyx and containing the Book of Mormon in *de luxe* binding. Mr. Sjödahl said:

“Your Majesty!

“I have come from Utah, from one of the western states of the North American Union, to bring your Majesty, on behalf of Swedes and Norwegians there, homage and congratulations. We, too, in the far-away West, are praying the Almighty to grant to your Majesty a long life, for the welfare of the brother-nations.”

“His Majesty replied in part:

“Tell my countrymen, the Swedes and Norwegians in Utah, that I thank them sincerely for the beautiful present they have sent me. I wish them success in their far-away land’.”²⁴

From the letter of congratulation sent by the First Presidency, I copy the following:

“Elder Sjödahl has been selected by his fellow countrymen, natives of Sweden and Norway, a large body of whom reside in and are citizens of the state of Utah—to proceed to the Court of their Majesties, King Oscar II and Queen Sophia, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of their ascension to the throne, for the purpose of presenting in their name and behalf, to their Majesties, a casket made of Utah onyx, containing a copy of the Book of Mormon, as an expression of the high esteem, affection, and love which the Scandinavians of this Intermountain region entertain for their Majesties, with the hope and earnest desire that their Majesties will live to witness many happy returns of this most auspicious event.

“And we, ourselves, though not of the Scandinavian race, do most heartily join with our Scandinavian friends and fellow citizens in desiring long life, peace, prosperity, and happiness

²⁴*Redogörelse for Konung Oscar II:s 25-åriga Regerings jubileum*, p. 231. Also, *Deseret News*, Oct. 12, 1897.

for their majesties, King OSCAR II, and Queen SOPHIA, of Sweden and Norway.

Wilford Woodruff,
George Q. Cannon, Joseph F. Smith,
First Presidency.

"Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Salt Lake City, Utah, U. S. A., Aug. 20, 1897."²⁵

I discovered afterwards, although I did not think of it at the time, that the presentation to King Oscar was made on the seventieth anniversary of the very day when the original plates were delivered to Joseph Smith by Moroni.

"*What became of the Book of Mormon plates,*" is a question sometimes asked. Brigham Young, at a special conference at Farmington, June 17, 1877, on which occasion the Davis stake was organized, said:

"When Joseph got the plates, the angel instructed him to carry them back to the hill Cumorah, which he did. Oliver Cowdery says that when Joseph and he went there, the hill opened, and they walked into a cave, in which there was a large and spacious room. He says he did not think, at the time, whether they had the light of the sun or artificial light; but it was just as light as day. They laid the plates on a table. It was a large table that stood in the room. Under this table there was a pile of plates as much as two feet high, and there were altogether in this room more plates than many wagon loads. They were piled up in the corners and along the walls. The first time they went there, the sword of Laban hung upon

²⁵Ib., p. 119. An elegant copy of the official report was sent to me by the direction of the king, the following year, accompanied by this notice: "På Nädigste befallning får Chefen för H. M. Konungens Hofförvaltning härmed åran öfverlemna ett exemplar af Redogörelsen för H. M. Konungens 25-åriga regerings jubileum, Stockholm den 17 September, 1898."

the wall, but when they went again it had been taken down and laid upon the table across the gold plates. It was unsheathed, and on it was written these words: 'This sword will never be sheathed again until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and his Christ.'"—*Jour. of Dis.*, Vol. 19, p. 38.

President Young, in the same discourse, said he had this from Oliver Cowdery himself, and from others familiar with the incident related. "Don Carlos Smith," he says, was a "witness to these things." He also mentions Samuel and Hyrum Smith.