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How About It?

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Abstract: This article is a challenge to read the Book of Mormon to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of the delivery of the plates to Joseph Smith, and a warning against neglecting the scriptures. The Book of Mormon is the word of God, a spiritual guide, and it confirms the truths in the Bible. Testimonies of Parley P. Pratt and B. H. Roberts are included.

Editors' Table

How About It?

Are you reading the Book of Mormon? Elder Junius F. Wells, supported by the executive officers of the M. I. A., in a personal communication, under date of August 7, to the board members, urged them to read the Book of Mormon and to report that they have completed the reading by September 22, the one-hundredth anniversary of the delivery of the plates to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Many of the members have already reported progress; some are reading sixteen pages a day, a very interesting and invigorating exercise between six and seven o'clock in the morning. We shall probably hear that a great majority of the one hundred members of the General Boards have completed the task when they report on September 21.

Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, in his statement in this number of the *Era*, calculates that the translation of the Book of Mormon was completed in the first week in June, 1829, a few days before the copyright was obtained, and that, according to the best historical facts, the total time occupied in actual translation was about sixty days. This being the case, is there any member who will say that the Book of Mormon can not be read, and that with fair results, in the same length of time? May we suggest that stake and ward M. I. A. officers make arrangements, and decide that the Book of Mormon shall be read in the next sixty days by all of them, and if not that early, then on or before the close of the year. A date should be set for a report in each ward and stake. In this way the officers will be an example for the membership, who should be encouraged to do the same. One hour a day means about sixteen pages; one-half hour, eight pages. There are 522 pages; hence, the book can be read, taking one hour a day, in about thirty-three days; or taking half an hour, in about sixty-six days. Such reading will reveal the spirit of the book and give general and necessary vision of its contents, whetting the appetite for more careful study at each perusal thereafter, in which new revelations and truths will delight the soul.

"We believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God," reads one of our Articles of Faith. Our religion being first and foremost in our lives, what shall be said of those who neglect to read the word of God—the Scriptures? We are also commanded to search the scriptures for instruction, but we are prone to neglect this counsel. Orson Pratt, away back in 1856, in a Tabernacle sermon, said that the Saints were careless and neglectful in reading the scriptures. We fear this applies today, and that many are under condemnation because they have neglected to read the Book of Mormon. If we read it, we shall then get original knowledge, not second-hand, of a book which is to the Latter-day Saints of more value than any other except the holy Bible. But we should know it for ourselves. Understand-

ing one's faith through hearsay is unsafe. Reading the scriptures for oneself will bring new understanding, new thought, a clearer vision. The reading of the Book of Mormon is accompanied by peace, calmness and the spirit of consolation, which can come only from the reading of a book divine. In the Book of Mormon, the story of Christ and his gospel plan are plainly presented. It is a book divine in very deed. Every illustration in it shows that iniquity brings punishment, and real righteousness in daily practice brings the blessings of the Lord. The Book of Mormon is a confirmation of the truths of the Bible, which latter record alludes to its coming out of the earth. It is a new witness for Christ and a confirming evidence of the reality of our Lord's spiritual and bodily resurrection,—a strong testimony of the resurrection and mission of Christ. It is full, likewise, of truths dealing originally and intellectually with profound subjects; such as, the Fall of Adam, the Purpose of Man's Existence, Pre-existence and Immortality of Man, Man's Free Agency, the Atonement, the Need of Opposites, and the Opposition of Good and Evil. The Book of Mormon is not only a spiritual guide, but contains fundamental doctrine, ethics, and rules of practice that should be lived by the Latter-day Saints and adopted in their lives. Every Latter-day Saint should be as familiar with it as with his daily walk and conversation, because its rules of life are what he should follow. Its spirit and influence are referred to in a message by the General Superintendency and also clearly set forth in an article in this number of the *Era*, by President Wm. A. Hyde, which we commend to our young people for study. President George Q. Cannon said: "Let me recommend this book to young and old, if they need comfort and encouragement. No man can read it, partake of its spirit and obey its teachings, without being filled with a deep love for the souls of men." Parley P. Pratt said, in a sermon, "The joy which filled my bosom in reading that sacred record I can never express to any being. To have such joy understood, it must be experienced." On the spirit of the book, Elder B. H. Roberts says, "Men have gone to the Book of Mormon in despondency, and have come away cheered; they have gone to it in sorrow, and have come away comforted; they have gone to it at times when overwhelmed, for the moment, by the mists which the speculations of men sometimes throw over truth, and have come away from it enlightened, with faith, and hope, and charity renewed. It created for them a firmer faith in God. In the presence of its Spirit, doubt took wings. Its moral and spiritual standards they find to be the highest and noblest."

What more can we say than to encourage young and old to read this sacred record, which has so largely added to the spiritual life of our day? Do it, as Moroni says, "with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, in order that he may manifest the truth of it to you by the power of the Holy Ghost."

We commend every article in this number of the *Improvement Era* to the attention of our readers, as giving encouragement to them to peruse the Book of Mormon and to make it a study. Ask yourself, What About It?—A.