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Easily Caught

Author(s): T. W. Brookbank

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Abstract: This article responds to the objection that the Book of Mormon was originally inscribed on metal plates. Numerous examples in the Old Testament demonstrate the working of metal from early ages, including Tubal-Cain's work with brass and iron (Genesis 4:22), the brass gates of Babylon (Isaiah 45:1-2), the use of steel in Job's day (Job 20:24), the golden calf made in the wilderness, and all the gold of Moses' tabernacle (Exodus 25:17-36).

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR.

THURSDAY, JULY 31, 1913.

EDITORIAL.

EASILY CAUGHT.

A FRIEND has recently called our attention to an objection which anti-"Mormons" sometimes urge against the claims of this Church that the originals of the Book of Mormon were written upon metal plates; the first of which were prepared about six hundred years before the beginning of the present era. The objection rests upon the assumed ground that the working of metals was unknown among the Israelites at that early period of their history; and it is proposed with an evident feeling of genuine anti-"Mormon" commiseration for the presumed ignorance of our people, which they think is so plainly manifested in believing that anything like an advanced stage of knowledge in metallurgical arts was then existent. Of course, if this objection had even a semblance of truth to which it might cling, there would be some sort of excuse for our opponents to propose it with an effort at seriousness; but while Satan finds it necessary to bait most of his hooks with SOMETHING in order to catch anti-"Mormon" fish, his way of taking them in this instance reminds us of the fact that sometimes when fish are numerous and young in experience, boys catch some of them with a naked hook just by dangling it in their midst, and at the proper moment giving it a sudden lift. No bait used—just hook.

We are going to give some attention to this matter, but really feel that an apology for doing so is due to our readers, and it is tendered with the admonition that our remarks must not be taken as a reflection on their intelligence; but the groundlessness of this attack on our cause may serve to suggest to some persons that many other objections which anti-"Mormons" roll as sweet morsels under their tongues, are as unsubstantial as this one is, and such, indeed, is the fact. They tell us with an air of crushing confidence that what they want is "facts"—nothing like the alleged "Mormon" take-for-granted will satisfy them—and, yielding to their desire, a few of the real, genuine kind will be submitted to them for their needed enlightenment.

Going back in the records of early history to about the year 3875 B.C., which is not very long after man first appeared on this earth, according to the commonly accepted chronology, we read that Zillah had a son called Tubal-cain who was "an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron" (Gen. 4: 22).

The significance of the statement that this man was an instructor of artificers who worked in brass, as we especially note, does not appear until we reflect that it is a compound of copper and zinc, or if the brass here spoken of was made of copper and tin—known to us as bronze—it is, nevertheless, a compound, and the skill necessary to work in metals so as to form valuable alloys, manifests the development of metallurgical science and art to a state of excellence which is far greater than that required for the management of such easily handled substances as gold and copper.

“In ancient history, biblical and profane, frequent allusions are made to the employment of brass in the construction of musical instruments, vessels, implements, ornaments, and even gates.” (Chambers's Encyc., Art. Brass.) Of the latter we have the famous examples of early construction in the two-leaved gates of brass which closed the entrances to the city of Babylon, and which Cyrus was to break in pieces” (Isa. 45: 1, 2).

We have found that Tubal-cain was skilled in the art of working iron as well as brass or bronze, and we observe that some time after this very early period a process for converting iron into steel was discovered—a fact which shows that as time progressed metallurgical science and art were also advanced. Job, 1520 B.C., speaks of this refined metal as being in use in those days (20: 24); and it is mentioned in II. Sam. 22: 35, there having a date of about 1018 B.C.; and to Jeremiah (15: 12), B.C. 601, it was likewise known. These references serve to forestall any attempt on the part of our opponents to show, or claim rather, that the Book of Mormon is in error when it speaks of STEEL as being in use among the Nephites in their early history.

A remarkable example of metallurgical skill occurred about 1490 B.C., when the Israelites made the golden calf in the wilderness during their march from Egypt to the land of Palestine. The conditions under which that idol was made are ideal to show clearly the proficiency of the Israelites as workers in metals and their aptitude as inventive geniuses. When they left the land of their Egyptian oppressors, they could have had no expectation of using, within a brief period, their knowledge and skill in the art of molding art objects, and taking, as they did, their flight in haste, they would not think of carrying with them the tools and appliances of the arts. However, all the difficulties which they had to encounter in making that golden image, were successfully met.

But that golden calf was not the only artistic work which the Israelites produced when the conditions of their desert life were so unfavorable, and the conveniences for doing the work were so few. While in a migratory period of their history which, it seems, would ordinarily paralyze every artistic effort, they were required by the Almighty to execute some of the finest work in gold that ever graced this earth. What that was we learn in part from the inspired description as follows: “And thou shalt make a mercy

seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. * * * And thou shalt make the dishes (of the table of shewbread) thereof, and the spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover withal: of pure gold shalt thou make them. * * * And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers shall be of the same. And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side: three bowls made like unto almonds, with a knop and a flower in one branch; and three bowls made like almonds in the other branch, with a knop and a flower: so in the six branches that come out of the candlestick. And in the candlestick shall be four bowls made like unto almonds, with their knops and their flowers. And there shall be a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches that proceed out of the candlestick. Their knops and their branches shall be of the same: and it shall be one beaten work of pure gold" (Exodus 25: 17-36). The reader should study chapters twenty-five to twenty-eight in order to ascertain how largely the working of metals was required.

It was all planned by a Celestial Designer, and it is destructive of our conceptions of congruous association not to think that the work was executed in the most exquisite manner.

Our appreciation of the artistic skill displayed is intensified when we consider that the artists were in a desert where means for carrying on their work had to be created on the spot. They show us a wonderful manifestation of inventive genius and consummate skill in metal working. All the conditions considered we have here an example unparalleled in all history, and withal so successful that it stands by itself, apart from all others, unapproachable in its merits from any source, and what intelligent person is there who can maintain, without the blush of confusion, that such people, or their descendants, were not sufficiently skilled to make a few flat plates of gold or brass having the dimensions of a few inches in length and breadth, and then fasten them together in the form of a book with some rings. This work of making the exquisite tabernacle furniture was done about 1490 B.C.

Coming, now, down to the time of Solomon, 1005 B.C., when the

magnificent furnishings for the temple at Jerusalem were made, we find a sacred description of some of them, in brief, as follows: "And Hiram made the lavers, and the shovels, and the basons. So Hiram made an end of doing all the work that he made king Solomon for the house of the Lord: the two pillars, and the two bowls of the chapiters that were on the top of the two pillars; and two networks, to cover the two bowls of the chapiters which were on the top of the pillars; and four hundred pomegranates for the two networks, even two rows of pomegranates for one network, to cover the two bowls of the chapiters that were upon the pillars; and the ten bases, and ten lavers on the bases; and one sea, and twelve oxen under the sea; and the pots, and the shovels, and the basons: and all these vessels, which Hiram made to king Solomon for the house of the Lord, were bright brass. In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarthan. And Solomon left all the vessels unweighed, because they were exceeding many: neither was the weight of the brass found out. And Solomon made all the vessels that pertained unto the house of the Lord: the altar of gold, and the table of gold, wherenpon the shewbread was. And the candlesticks of pure gold, five on the right side, and five on the left, before the oracle, with the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs of gold, and the bowls, and the snuffers, and the basons, and the spoons, and the censers of pure gold; and the hinges of gold, both for the doors of the inner house, the most holy place, and for the doors of the house, to wit, of the temple" (1. Kings 7: 40-50).

These quoted passages contain a summary, in part, of the magnificent works of art with which the famous temple of the Jews was beautified and adorned. It is not complete, for it does not mention some of the most exquisite furnishings, as we find from the reading of 1. Kings, chapter six. The whole temple, too, was overlaid with gold, and even the floors were plated with this same precious metal. All the walls were covered with "carved figures of cherubims and palm trees and open flowers, within and without." This temple became famous the world over, and we can readily believe that its glorious appearance amply sustained its renown. What magnificence and lavishness of art adorned that sacred house we may faintly imagine from the statement of the scriptures that because of the immense number of vessels of gold and silver they were not weighed, "neither was the weight of the brass found out."

We must go to Josephus for some particulars of interest in this regard; but before quoting his statements relative to the number of utensils supplied for the temple service, a few words from his works are submitted in order to show that the chief artificer under whose direction they were made was, indeed, an Israelite. He says: "Now Solomon sent for an artificer out of Tyre, whose name was Hiram. He was by birth of the tribe of Napthali, on

his mother's side (for she was of that tribe), but his father was Ur, of the stock of the Israelites. This man was skillful in all sorts of work : but his chief skill lay in working in gold, in silver, and brass" (Antiq. book viii., chap. III).

Respecting the number of utensils made for the service of the temple he says: "The king also dedicated a great number of tables, but one that was larger and made of gold, and he made ten thousand more that resembled them, but were done after another manner, upon which lay the vials and the eups; those of gold were twenty thousand, and those of silver were forty thousand. He also made ten thousand candlestieks." He informs us that of pouring vessels there were eighty thousand, and one hundred thousand vials all of gold, and twice as many of silver. Of golden dishes to offer kneaded fine flour at the altar there were eighty thousand, and one hundred and sixty thousand of silver. Large basins of gold in which to mix fine flour with oil numbered sixty thousand, and there were one hundred and twenty thousand of silver. Of golden measures called a Hin there were twenty thousand, and twice as many of silver.

The censers of gold numbered twenty thousand, and of other censers for other purposes they made fifty thousand. Two hundred thousand trumpets were manufactured, and forty thousand psalteries and harps of the finest brass. (See Antiq. book, and chapter as before.)

In view of all that we can learn from both sacred and profane history respecting the magnificence of Solomon's temple, and the lavish and beautiful manner in which it was adorned and furnished, we perceive that not a few only, but a host of skillful artisans must have lived in those times, who were capable of turning out the most exquisite specimens of art in gold, in silver, and in brass.

Remarks are concluded by reminding our opponents that Isaiah, B. C. 712, when writing the eighth verse of his thirtieth chapter, evidently had in mind the use of metal tablets as material for records. He says: "Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever." The Hebrew for "the time to come" is "the latter day." Unless Isaiah knew of the practice of writing on metal there is no significance in saying that what was recorded should remain for ever and ever, or till "the latter day." He certainly must have known that the ordinary material upon which writing was placed would perish in the course of time; and while we can not say that in the quoted passage he had particular reference to the brass plates which Nephi obtained from Laban, as recorded in the Book of Mormon, the whole tenor of his language tends to sustain the proposition that those very plates were in his mind when he wrote as he did.

That there is absolutely nothing upon which to base the objec-

tion that the Book of Mormon claims can not be true because the Israelites who lived as early as B. C. 600, did not know enough to make a few flat plates of gold, must be evident from the facts now presented, and we see how some anti-“Mormons” are caught with unbaited hooks.

T. W. B.

CHOICE OF FRIENDS.

IT is of no small importance in life to be cautious regarding the company you keep, and with whom you enter into friendship; for though you be ever so well disposed and happen to be ever so free from vice, yet if those with whom you frequently converse be engaged in a wicked course of conduct, it will be almost impossible for you to escape being drawn into the same with them.

If you are truly wise and would shun those *Siren* rocks of pleasure upon which so many thousands have been shipwrecked of virtue, you should forbid yourselves all manner of intercourse and correspondence with those who are steering a course which reason, if consulted, will tell you is not only disadvantageous to them, but must end in their destruction. All the virtue you can boast of will not be sufficient to protect you, if you associate with bad company; for though your firmness be so great that by it you might expect to preserve yourselves from becoming infected and tainted by their manners, yet their spirit will twist and intertwine itself into yours in so intricate a fold that you may never be able to separate them. “Be not deceived,” says the apostle, “Evil communications corrupt good manners” (I. Cor. 15: 33). “Who will pity an enchanter struck by a serpent, or any that come near wild beasts; so it is with him that keepeth company with a wicked man and is involved in his sins.” “He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled by it” (Eccles. 12: 18; 13: 1).

Both manners and morals are of a very insinuating texture; like water—that which is derived from the clearest spring, if it chance to mingle with a foul current, runs on for the future undistinguished in one muddy stream with the other, and must afterwards partake of the color and condition of its associate.—*The Echo* (Catholic, American).

FROM THE MISSION FIELD.

Change in Conference Presidency.—Elder Stewart Eccles has been appointed President of the London conference to succeed President James B. Walkley who has been honorably released to return home, after faithful service in the London missionary field. President Eccles address is “Deseret,” 152 High Road, South Tottenham, London, N.