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American Antiquities: Corroborative of the Book of Mormon

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Abstract: This 47-part series provides evidence to confirm the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. It describes the contents of the Book of Mormon and archaeological findings and discoveries, such as ancient cities, temples, altars, tools, and wells. Each part contains several excerpts from other publications that support the Book of Mormon.

by strangers, who seem to feel anxious to learn the principles of life and salvation. We are baptizing continually in one part or another, and the prospects are still good for additional increase.

I feel well, and am determined to give an attentive ear to every call that may be made by you; and the brethren that are in connection with me feel the same.

My constant prayer is that God may

bless you and your Counsellors with wisdom, knowledge, and power from on high, so that you may be able to fill your responsible positions honourably and impart the principles of salvation unto all of us that are under your watchcare.

I am, as ever,
Your humble brother in Christ,
BENJAMIN EVANS.

AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES,

CORROBORATIVE OF THE BOOK OF MORMON.

(Continued from page 706.)

When the mud, which covered the bottom to a depth of several feet, was cleared away, the upper basin was found to contain upwards of 40 wells, differing in character and construction, and from 20 to 25 feet in depth. These ingenious contrivances of the aborigines to supply the natural deficiencies of the land have proved an immense boon to their degenerate descendants and their Spanish masters; for in a country almost destitute of water-courses, as Yucatan, these aguadas were of very great importance, even while their precise character was still unknown. Besides these artificial reservoirs, which, as has been said, are scattered all over the face of the country, there are in Yucatan other wells of a most extraordinary character, of which the present inhabitants avail themselves, and which, from various indications, it is evident have also been known and resorted to by the ancient populations. One of these, in the neighbourhood of the village of Bolanchen, is most remarkable, and at the same time comprises the leading features of all. The descent to this well, or these wells—for there are seven distinct basins containing water—is through the mouth of a rocky cavern, and continues through the bowels of the earth down to a perpendicular depth of 450 feet, but by a pathway in the rock 1,400 feet in length, and at times so precipitous as to necessitate the use of ladders varying from 20 to 80 feet in length. Of these ladders, which are of a most primitive description, being made of rough rounds of wood bound together with osiers, there are no less than seven to be descended and ascended by the Indians, who from these mysterious sources carry up on their backs during four months of each year the full supply of water necessary for the consumption of the population of the village,

amounting to 7,000 souls. In other parts of the country, the Indians, in their descent and ascent from wells of a similar nature, have to pass through passages in the rock so low as to oblige them to crawl on hands and feet; on which occasion the bands passed round their foreheads, and to which the gourds containing the water are attached, are lengthened so as to allow the latter to hang below their hips, in order that they may not protrude beyond the height of the body in this crouching attitude. The unmurmuring cheerfulness with which this patient race pursue their daily task, apparently as unconscious of its laboriousness as of its dangers, affords a little insight into the qualities which render possible the construction of such works of labour as those with which the country is covered; and it further leads to the conclusion—which indeed the history of Mexico corroborates—that the monuments of the ancient civilization of America, like those of the Old World, have been the work of slaves, toiling like machines, under the direction of masters who allowed them no share in the intellectual light which gave to themselves the power and taught them the means of executing such stupendous undertakings. In addition to the ingenious cisterns above described, there are among the ruins but one kind of structures which may be supposed to have served for useful purposes. There are subterraneous chambers scattered over the whole area enclosed within the walls of the cities, and about five yards or a little more in diameter, with dome-like ceilings, and lined throughout with cement. Access to them is gained by circular holes in the ground, so small, that a man can with difficulty introduce his body. As many as have been explored have been found quite empty, with the exception of

one, in which was found a small earthenware vessel. At first it was suggested that these chambers might have been water-cisterns; but nearer examination proved them not to be fit for that purpose; and subsequently a more probable opinion has been adopted—namely, that they have served as depositories for the maize, or Indian corn, which was in universal use among the natives of both the American continents at the period of their discovery by the Europeans. Beyond these, the ruins afford no traces of the life and habits of their former occupants. There is, however, one mysterious feature connected with these buildings, and observed even in those most distant from each other, which is of the utmost importance, not only as further proving the similarity of thought and feeling, because of sign and symbol existing between their respective populations, but still more as affording a connecting link between these populations and some of the tribes which to this day inhabit the North American continent. We allude to the print of a red hand, which has been found on the walls of the edifices in almost all the cities explored. The sign of the hand, we are told, is not painted, but seems literally printed upon the stones by the pressure of the living hand while moist with the paint, as every minute line and seam of the palm is visible. It is a remarkable fact that this same sign constantly recurs on the skins of animals purchased from the Indian hunters on the Rocky Mountains; and it is, indeed, said to be in common use among the tribes in the north. According to Mr. Schoolcraft, a gentleman who has devoted much attention to the habits and customs of the Indians,

and quoted by Mr. Stephens, the figure of the human hand is used by the North American Indians to denote supplication to the Great Spirit; and it stands in their system of picture-writing as the symbol of strength, power, or mastery thus derived. By analogies such as the above must the history of the deserted cities and their inhabitants be traced, for their walls and sculptures are the only records of them extant. Among those that we have mentioned, the name of Copan indeed holds a place in the history of the Spanish conquest, a city of this name being mentioned as having revolted against the Spaniards in 1530, and as having bravely resisted the attacks of the Spanish soldiers sent to bring it back to subjection. But the general belief is that these ruins are of a date much anterior to this period; and there are points in the Spanish narrative of the reduction of Copan which could not be applied to a city surrounded by such strong walls as the one whose ruins we have surveyed. Of the ruins now designated by the appellation of Palenque, not even the name is known, as has been seen, and no tradition hovers round the spot to tell of its past glory: the tale is left to its sculptured walls, and even these will not long survive to tell it. Of Uxmal the same may be said. The name of these ruins is derived from that of the estate on which they stand. In the oldest deed belonging to the family who owns this property, and which goes back 140 years, they are referred to as Las Casas di Piedras, the common appellation for the ruined structures throughout the country. Of the past existence of Kabah not a record or a tradition is extant.

(To be continued.)

PASSING EVENTS.

GENERAL.—According to advices received from Sicily, the insurrection had not ceased: the brothers Mantrichi are at the head of the movement: reinforcements of troops are being despatched by the Neapolitan Government to quell the insurrection: numerous arrests have taken place at Palermo, Cattano, and Messina. The *Independance* of Turin says that 405,000 inhabitants of the Venetian territory have emigrated since January last. Spanish troops are on their way from Madrid to Morocco; and England is now preparing for an expedition to China. The coolie ship *Shah Jehan*, on the 27th June, while on a voyage from India to the Mauritius, caught fire, and on the 30th was entirely destroyed: 365 lives were lost.

AMERICAN.—On the 17th ult., an insurrection broke out at Harper's Ferry: a number of negroes and whites took possession of the arms and ammunition of the Federal Armoury or Arsenal, stopped the railway trains, cut the telegraphic wires, shot one master, menaced a conductor, captured and held certain citizens as hostages, and sent loads of arms into Maryland and other places for the purpose, it is said, of rousing to action the negroes there and in Virginia and Delaware, and thus initiate a servile war. The authorities, however, sent an ample supply of troops and shut up the insurgents in a fortified post: the Armoury was recaptured by the U. S. marines, and the town by the Militia forces. A few lives were lost on both sides.