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Editorial Thoughts

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Abstract: Asserts that the inhabitants discovered by the Europeans in America are descendants of Laman and Lemuel. The Book of Mormon peoples lived principally in Central and South America. LDS church members should recognize the important role of the Indians among the Gentiles.

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The Juvenile Instructor.

GEORGE Q. CANNON, ; EDITOR.

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EDITORIAL THOUGHTS.

CHILDREN who have read the INSTRUCTOR from the beginning ought to know something about the Indians. There have been a number of articles published in it about them. When America was discovered by white men from Europe the Indian race covered the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific. There was not a pale face nor a black face to be seen anywhere from one end of the land to the other. All the people then were red. The West India Islands, the first land discovered by Columbus, were also peopled by the same race. The Book of Mormon teaches us that these people were the children of Laman and Lemuel, and other men who were white, but who, because of their wickedness, brought this curse of a red skin upon their children. White men formerly lived in America. They were the children of Nephi and others who joined him; but they were all killed off by the Lamanites. When the Nephites were destroyed, the red men spread all over the land and split up into nations and tribes. Some of these were much more advanced in civilization than others. The white men who first visited Mexico and Central and South America were astonished at discovering states which had long lived in a high degree of civilization and luxury. Their cities and monuments were very magnificent. It was in Central and South America, according to the Book of Mormon, that the Nephites principally dwelt and flourished, and the ruins of cities and buildings which have been found, of late years, by travelers are said to be wonderfully grand. They are without doubt the remains of cities which the Nephites built and where they dwelt.

In these mountains, and throughout the Great Basin, the red men, when first discovered by the whites, were low and degraded and but a little above the brutes in many things. The eastern country was peopled by a much nobler race. They were a wild and ferocious people, yet they built villages and cultivated the soil to some extent. Even as late as the revolution, when the thirteen colonies fought with Great Britain for their independence, the Genesee valley presented the appearance of civilization. There was not a wilderness feature in the scene. The country appeared to have been cultivated for many generations. The race of Indians that then inhabited that country were said to have no knowledge of the earlier cultivators of the soil. In 1779 their farms, orchards and gardens would have been creditable to any white race. But generally the dwellings of the Indians were of the simplest and rudest character. On some pleasant spot by the banks of a river, or near a spring, they raised their groups of wigwams, made out of the bark of trees. They could easily take these down and remove them to another spot. Their villages were sometimes surrounded by upright sticks of wood planted in the ground to defend them against the attacks of their enemies. Skins, taken in the chase, served them for bedding. In this western country, where timber is scarce, their dwellings, or lodges, are made out of skins. Bark would be difficult to ob-

tain, and skins answer a better purpose, as the western tribes travel about more than the Indians in the east did.

When the whites first landed in America the red men were disposed to treat them with kindness and assist them all they could. But, as a general thing, these kind feelings did not last long. In almost every place the settlers and the Indians soon got to fighting. The colony of which William Penn was the leader was an exception. He settled in what is now known as Pennsylvania, and he and his people treated the Indians with great kindness, and did not have to fight with them. But in other places the whites took advantage of the Indians in many ways and treated them with great cruelty. This conduct the red men resented. Year after year they saw the whites increasing around them, taking possession of their lands, breaking up their hunting grounds and spoiling their fisheries. How could they stop this? By waging war against the whites? They felt that they had been terribly wronged by the whites; and in return they inflicted dreadful vengeance upon them. The tales of their cruelty are horrid. A writer has expressed their feelings towards the whites in the following lines:

"Before their coming, we had ranged
Our forests and our upland free;
Still let us keep unsold, unchanged,
The heritage of Liberty.
As free as roll the chainless streams,
Still let us roam our ancient woods;
As free as break the morning beams,
That light our mountain solitudes.

"Touch not the hand they stretch to you;
The falsely-protter'd cup put by;
Will you believe a coward true?
Or taste the poison'd draught, to die?
Their friendship is a lurking snare;
Their honor but an idle breath;
Their smile the smile that traitors wear;
Their love is hate, their life is death."

The prevalent idea outside of the Latter-day Saints now is that the Indians will soon all perish. There are very many people who think they ought to be killed off like so many wild beasts. And they do not hesitate about killing them whenever they have a chance. This is very wrong, and he who kills an Indian, unless in self-defence, is as much a murderer as if he killed a white man. God will punish those who do such things. There are many promises made by the Lord in the Book of Mormon to the Indians. The gospel of Jesus Christ is to be declared unto them. They are to come to the knowledge of the truth, and many generations shall not pass away among them, before they will become a white and delightful people.

Do not allow yourselves, children, to imbibe the ideas about the Indians so commonly entertained at the present time, namely, that they are good for nothing but to be killed. They are the descendants of Abraham, the friend of God. God covenanted with their fathers that, in the last days, he would remember and save them. They have a great work to do yet among the Gentiles. They are the Lord's battle-axe, and He will use them to do His work. Many of them may perish, but a remnant must be saved.

The love of play is congenial to children, as it is congenial to the little lambs to romp and frisk about. There is no harm in children liking to play. Improper play, and improper times of play, are what should be avoided, for there is where the harm or evil may be found.

Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.