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Visit to the Land and Hill of Cumorah

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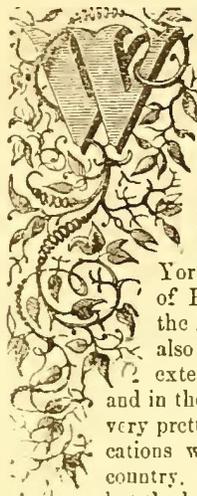
Abstract: After making a visit to the Hill Cumorah, located near Palmyra, the author presents a description of the hill, and considers the destruction of two Book of Mormon peoples at the site.

The Juvenile Instructor.

GEORGE Q. CANNON - - - EDITOR.

SATURDAY, JULY 5, 1873.

VISIT TO THE LAND AND HILL OF CUMORAH.



HILL on a recent visit to the States on business Brother Brigham Young, Jun., and the Editor of the JUVENILE INSTRUCTOR arranged to make a visit to the hill Cumorah—the hill where Mormon and Moroni secreted the records, by the command of the Lord, which were revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and from which he translated the Book of Mormon. As we were traveling eastward, we took the New York Central Railroad at Buffalo for the town of Palmyra. This town is prettily situated on the New York and Erie Canal, and the railroad also runs close by it. Trees are cultivated extensively on the sides of some of the streets and in the city lots, and some of the residences are very pretty and tastefully arranged. From the indications we imagined that this must be a wealthy country. The farms around are highly cultivated; but the land does not yield grains and fruit as it once did. It was at Palmyra that the first edition of the Book of Mormon was published. We put up at the leading hotel and engaged a carriage to take us out to Cumorah, which was about three miles distant from Palmyra. We took the old stage road to Canandaigua. The scenery on this road was exceedingly fine. It was a season of the year when the country was seen to the best advantage and its appearance called forth our admiration. We had proceeded a little over a mile on the road when the driver of the carriage pointed out a hill to us on our left, which he said was "Mormon Hill." We supposed that by this he meant Cumorah. Though in its general appearance it resembled the descriptions we had had of Cumorah, yet we were somewhat disappointed in its size, as it was not so high a hill as many others which we saw in the neighborhood. In fact, as we rode along, we saw several hills which we thought more like what we imagined Cumorah to be than the one pointed out to us. We rode on for probably two miles farther, conversing but very little and each absorbed in his own reflections, when we saw, immediately in front of us, a hill that rose suddenly, almost precipitously, from the plain. Brother Brigham, Jun., remarked when we saw it: "There is a hill which agrees in appearance with my idea of Cumorah." In this opinion the Editor coincided. The driver, hearing our remarks, turned to us and said: "Yes, this is Gold Bible Hill." We then learned that Cumorah was known through this country by the name of "Gold Bible Hill." We asked him what he meant by calling the other, which he had pointed out to us, "Mormon Hill." He replied that there was a cave in that hill which the "Mormons" had dug and some of them had lived in it, so the people said; and, therefore, it was known by that name.

Close at the foot of Cumorah there is a comfortable farm house. The driver got permission to leave his carriage in the barnyard while we climbed the hill. The hill is fenced in and inclosed in a farm. The road runs on the west side of it, and is only a few hundred yards from its base. It presented a most

remarkable appearance as one travels on the road from Palmyra as we did. No observing person could pass it without being struck by its singular appearance. It rises so abruptly at its north end that it is somewhat difficult to climb. Its base is quite broad, but at the north end the summit is quite narrow—almost a ridge, on which a few trees are growing. The view from the top of the hill was one of the finest the writer ever beheld, and we could not refrain from expressions of pleasure at the beauty of the scene and the extensive prospect which a view from the summit afforded. The hill seemed to be in the centre of what might be termed an extensive valley. On every side the horizon was bounded, at a distance of four or five miles from where we stood, by a range of hills. The intervening country was not a smooth, regular valley; but there were low hills, and dales—fields and groves of timber, broken at intervals by water courses. We saw several villages and towns in the distance. Undoubtedly great changes had occurred in the appearance of the surrounding country since the days when Mormon and Moroni had trod the spot where we stood; still we could readily understand, even now, how admirable a position this would be for a general to occupy in watching and directing the movements of armies and in scrutinizing the position of an enemy. Around Cumorah is yet a land of many waters, rivers and fountains, as Mormon said it was in his day. Our emotions on treading on this sacred hill were of the most peculiar character. They were indescribable. This was the hill Ramah of the Jaredites, and it is probable, that, in this vicinity, Coriantumr and Shiz, with the people whom they led, fought their last battle. For this great battle they were four years preparing, gathering the people together from all parts of the land, and arming men and women, and even children. The battle lasted eight days, and the result was the complete extermination of the Jaredite nation, none being left but the prophet Ether—who warned the nation of the fate that awaited it unless the people repented, and who lived to record the fulfilment of his own warnings and predictions—and Coriantumr who succeeded in slaying his mortal enemy, Shiz. It is probable that the prophet Ether, when he emerged from his hiding-place to view the destruction of his race, which he had been inspired to foretell, had ascended this hill and from its summit had gazed with profound grief upon the thousands of slain which lay scattered unburied upon the surface of the earth around. He and Coriantumr alone of all that mighty race which had flourished for upwards of fifteen hundred years, were left. Who can imagine the feelings which he must have had on such an occasion? From the summit of this hill, doubtless, Mormon and his great son Moroni had also witnessed the gathering of the hosts of the Nephites and the dusky and myriad legions of their deadly enemies, the Lamanites. Around this hill they had marshaled their forces—their twenty-three divisions of ten thousand men each, commanded by the most skillful of their generals; all to be swept away, except Mormon and Moroni and twenty-two others, in one day's battle, by the fierce and relentless foe whom God permitted to execute his threatened judgment! Stealthily perhaps, for fear of exciting the attention of the Lamanites, Mormon and Moroni and their companions may have ascended this hill and gazed on the dreadful scene around them. What a picture of desolation and woe must have met their sight! How deep must have been their anguish at thus witnessing the destruction of the fair ones of their nation! No wonder they cried out in anguish, and mourned with pathetic lamentations the rebellion against God which had brought this terrible destruction upon them. Mormon's feelings must have been very peculiar. At fifteen years of age chosen to be the commander-in-chief of the armies of his nation, he had fought battle after battle until now, at seventy-four years of age, he witnessed the complete blotting out of what had been the most favored people on the earth. His reflections must have been peculiarly painful,

because he knew that had they listened to him he could have saved them. It was here that he hid the abridgment which he made of the records, and which is now known by his name, and it was here, thirty-six years after this tremendous battle, that his son Moroni also hid his abridgment of the Book of Ether and the record which he had made from which we learn the fate of his father Mormon and his other companions, that sixteen years after the battle of Cumorah Mormon and all the Nephites except Moroni had been killed by the Lamanites. It was to this spot that about fourteen hundred years after these events, Joseph Smith, the prophet, was led by Moroni in person and here the records, engraved on plates, were committed to him for translation. Who could tread this ground and reflect upon these mighty events, and not be filled with indescribable emotion? We were literally surrounded by the graves of two of the mightiest nations which had ever flourished on the earth. We stood in the centre of their burial place. They had rebelled against God, they had slain His prophets, disregarded His warnings and arrayed themselves against Him. His promise and covenant concerning this land are: "that whatsoever nation shall possess it, shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fullness of His wrath shall come upon them. And the fullness of His wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity; for behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God, or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God."

The Jaredites, a great and a mighty race, the descendants of the most favored of men, had received the threatened penalty of disobedience and they were exterminated. The Nephites, too, than whom a more favored people never dwelt upon the earth of whom we have any account, when they became ripened in iniquity shared the same fate—they were blotted out. The inquiry arose, in reflecting upon the fate of those mighty empires, "How will it be with the American nation? Will its strength, the blessings which it enjoys, its numbers and prosperity, its liberty and boasted wisdom, and other great advantages, avail it anything in rescuing it from the same destruction if it persist in persecuting the Saints, in seeking to shed the blood of innocence and to destroy the priesthood and the Church of God?"

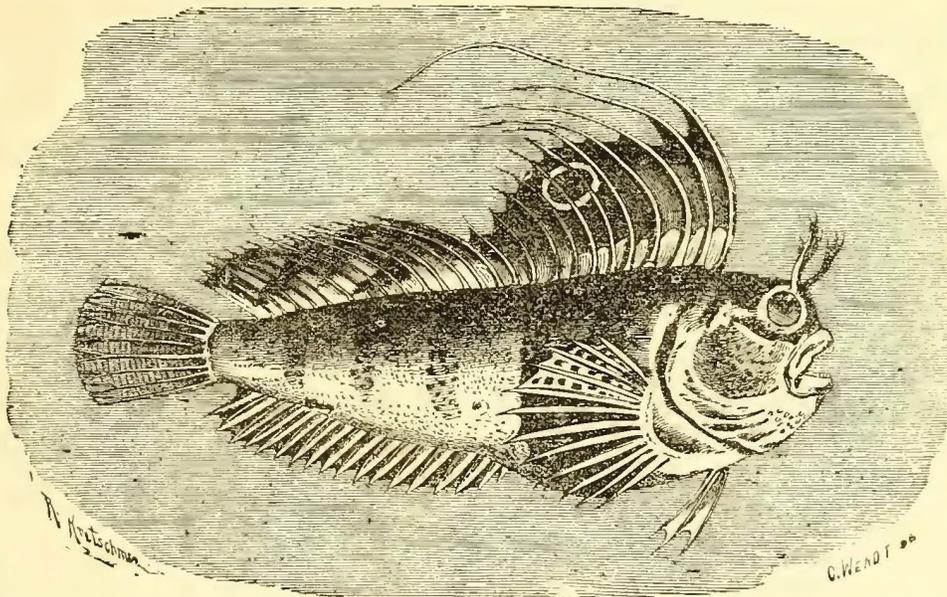
The surface of the hill is comparatively level and is narrow at its northern extremity. There is a tolerably clear space at the north end, there being but a few scattering trees standing there. In proceeding south the top of the hill becomes broader and the timber—beech, hickory, maple and other varieties—has quite a thick growth. Emerging from this timber, and less than half a mile from the north end of the hill, we came on a fenced field which is cleared of timber and cultivated. The surface of the hill from that point is rounding, and with the

sides, can easily be plowed. Beyond this field there are the stumps of the former forest of the country; and still beyond, proceeding south, a clearing which has been made, as Oliver Cowdery says in his description of the hill, by wind or air. Beyond this the hill loses its distinctive character and falls, not abruptly, however, to the level of the surrounding country.

From the hill we proceeded to Manchester, about three miles distant, the town where the Prophet Joseph Smith resided when he obtained the plates. The house in which he lived is no longer standing; but we thought of his trials and temptations, of the persecutions to which he had been subjected and how cruelly he had been treated; how often himself and his brothers and parents had traveled that road, with but scanty means and no friend but God. Then we contrasted those circumstances with those of the Saints and servants of God at the present time, and we felt thankful to the Almighty for the fulfilment of so many of His promises made through His servant Joseph.

THE BUTTERFLY FISH.

HERE is a picture of a curious little fish, belonging to the Blenny Family, or the Blennoids. Did it ever occur to



your mind that the denizens of the ocean are divided into families? You could hardly have helped thinking so if you have reflected on the subject at all, for you have already read enough to know that the finny tribes are very distinct in character. Some of them are very large and ferocious, others small and harmless; some make excellent food, while others

are not fit to be eaten. Some can fly for quite a distance in the air, while most of them die speedily when taken from the water. In fact there are almost as many varieties and peculiarities among the creatures that God has made which dwell in the waters as among His handiworks which dwell on land; and on account of these distinctions and peculiarities they have been separated into families by those who have given the whole of their time and attention to the study of natural history.

The family to which the fish belongs which is represented by the engraving is noted chiefly for living in companies. They are very small, and they perhaps live together for mutual protection. There are several varieties of these Blennies or social fishes, all closely related, but there are three principal or leading tribes among them, just as you can read about or know of there being leading or noted members in ancient and modern families among human beings.

The names given by naturalists to the leading families among the little fishes now under consideration are respectively—Blenny, Crested Blenny, and the Oscellated Blenny or Butterfly Fish. There is nothing remarkable about any of them, unless it be their social nature, so we shall confine the remainder of this