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Conversions Through the Book of Mormon - III. In Pennsylvania

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Conversions THROUGH THE BOOK OF MORMON

JOHN HENRY EVANS

III. In Pennsylvania

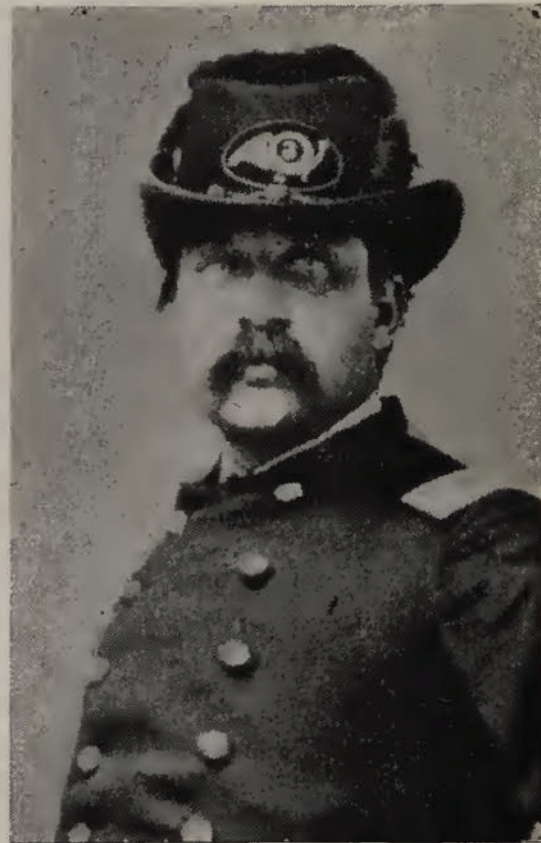
IN the 1860's there lived in Pennsylvania a boy who would become an artist, but whose parents were determined that he should be a physician. He was fifteen years old, and his name was destined to be known throughout Western America.

This boy was then attending a preparatory school — preparatory, that is, to a medical college. But the more his course of study looked forward to that profession, the more his feelings revolted at the thought of visiting the sick, of mending broken bones, of administering sugar-coated pills, and the more he believed he would like going out into the woods among the green, smelly things, to put their image on canvas in paint or water-colors.

At home the atmosphere was filled with altercations between him and his "obstinate" parents over the question of his future vocation in life. There seemed to be no way of settling the matter, and the more they talked the worse it appeared from his point of view. That was the period when the influence of parents was becoming less and less and the spirit of independence in

young people was clearly on the increase.

One day he cut the gordian knot by running away from home. He disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened her mouth and swallowed him, as it is said to have



GEORGE OTTINGER

done in the case of murmuring Korah, Dathan, and Abiram in the time of the great Moses. And he did not turn up again in his home town un-

til he was twenty-one and his "own boss," as he informed his parents.

And what a tale he had to tell!

His bag filled with extra clothing and a drawing outfit, he had joined the navy. When the ship docked at Central and South American ports, instead of looking for a beer hall, a dance hall, and girls, he roamed the woods nearby in search of subjects for art. His chief interest was natural scenery and natives, especially natives. Their nude bodies, their simple ways, their costumes, where they had any, caught his imagination. And when he returned home, he often entertained his friends by exhibiting his pictures and telling what he knew about the natives.

Once a friend said to him, "You ought to read Joe Smith's Book of Mormon. It tells about the Indians before anyone else knew about them. You'd be interested."

And so the artist bought the book. But instead of being interested in getting subjects for his art he became enthralled by its teachings and its spirit. As soon as he had finished reading it, he sought out someone who could tell him more about the volume.

His investigations led him, ultimately, to Utah, where he was baptized. As the University of Utah, the first of such schools west of the Mississippi, was then putting in an art department, he was chosen its first professor. That was due to his service to art during six years. When his duties as art professor did not demand his time, he served as fire chief in Salt Lake City. That

was a tribute to his work in Uncle Sam's navy.

This was George Ottinger.

Ottinger's interest in the Book of Mormon never waned, but grew instead. It proved, during his long life, an unflinching source for his art. In magazines, in murals, and in privately-owned collections, one will run upon his drawings; and most of the subjects, it will be found, originated, directly or indirectly, in the "Gold Bible" of the Mormons. Moreover, George Ottinger proved also the source of artistic inspiration to others, men and women, who have done credit to the State and the Church.

George Ottinger lived to be a very old man. He died in the faith.

Glorious Passing

Ruth Harwood

The passing of the day
 Recurs in burst of glory,
 Crimson, mauve, and gold.

The passing of the year
 Becomes too rapturously
 Beautiful for heart to hold.

In glow of rich transcendent
 Radiance let the passing
 Of our lives be also told!
