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## Irrefutable Evidence

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**Abstract:** A story about Oliver Cowdery, who never denied his testimony of the Book of Mormon.

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# Irrefutable Evidence

*By Orville S. Johnson*

**B**ESSIE GILMORE, seated up on the grassy bank of Willow Creek, looked up expectantly at the sound of approaching footsteps. The expression in her great dark eyes was eager, but mixed with trouble. She was far from certain just how Jerry Cammeron was going to react to what she had to say to him.

Jerry rounded the abrupt bend in the trail along the bank and came suddenly into view at the opposite edge of the tiny glade. At sight of Bessie he lengthened his stride.

"Beat me, didn't you?" he called out joyously. "Had no idea you thought so much of me."

She blushed, enhancing her rich coloring. "You more than likely will still have no idea of how much I think of you when we have finished our talk," she said solemnly. "I'm afraid you're going to be terribly shocked."

"Reckon I can stand it," was his ready retort. "I've been shocking corn all morning." He dropped upon the grass beside her.

She smiled and then immediately sobered. "You remember those two 'Mormon' boys who stopped for a few days at our place last spring?"

His face clouded heavily. His lips snapped into a thin, straight line. "You bet I do," he glowered. "If they'd stayed much longer, that infamous sect would have been minus two full sized members."

"What makes you feel that way, Jerry?" she said quietly.

"Heard pretty much all about them while I was at law school. They're no good. If your daddy

wasn't such a fanatic over religion he could have seen it."

"Why wouldn't I see it, Jerry?"

Too kind hearted. You'd be good to anybody. Even me."

"Not even you, Jerry, especially you. It's because I feel the way I do about you that I have to talk about this thing. Don't be cross, Jerry. It'll be over in a moment. All over. Did you ever talk to a— a Mormon?" There was a pleading sweetness about her that was soothing.

"No," he said shortly. "When I have time to talk I prefer you or somebody like Judge Harston."

"Judge Harston," she replied smiling. "He is interesting. He remembers Paul Revere, and Washington." She sobered again.

"I just received a letter, Jerry, from one of those Mormon boys who stayed with us. Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were recently killed by a mob while being held in jail at Carthage." She stopped, puzzled by the peculiar expression of satisfaction that had crossed his face.

"That ends that episode," he said. "Some of the professors said it wouldn't last long, but most of them figured it would develop into something really dangerous. A man with several thousand followers believing he has seen an angel can have a great effect on the weaker minded people of a nation. I'm glad it's over with. Was that what you wanted to tell me?" He was plainly relieved.

"Partly," she said. "The rest is harder. What makes you think the Mormon question is solved, Jerry?"

He was astonished at her blind-

ness. "Isn't their leader dead?" he demanded. "Who is there left to bamboozle them about God and angels bringing gold plates? They'll soon come to their senses, now."

"You think Joseph Smith was the only one who saw those things?" she queried.

"Oh, he hired witnesses, but they won't stand up long now that their paymaster is gone. Let's talk about something else besides fools and their follies. About court tomorrow, for instance. I've some interesting cases coming up for trial. Bring your father and enjoy yourselves. There's going to be some good comedy."

She drew in a deep breath. The light of determination in her eyes carried her over her river of fear. "Jerry," she said evenly, "what would you do if you learned I was a Mormon?"

He stared in open astonishment for a moment and then laughed softly. "Killed you, a week ago," he murmured, "but I'll let you outlive it, now. Let's go, little Mormon. I've work to do."

At the gate of her home she faced him once more. "Dad and I are both Mormons at heart, Jerry," she said softly. "We always will be. You'd better begin to adjust yourself to forgetting me."

He only laughed tenderly and kissed her. "Good night, sweetheart," he whispered tenderly.

An hour later he was back aglow with excitement. He came into the parlor where Bessie and her father were reading a chapter from the Book of Mormon before retiring. Bessie had laid the book down when she went to answer his knock. He saw it there upon the table and picked it up.

"I'm going to have use for this

tomorrow," he said. "May I borrow it?"

"I want you both there. This question of Mormonism is going to be exploded and the particles scattered so far apart that no two will ever meet again. I've just learned something that's going to make tomorrow one of the biggest days in my life. You'll come, won't you?"

They assured him they would.

When they arrived in front of the courthouse the next morning, it wasn't yet time for the session to begin. An unusually large crowd was gathered under the trees, talking and laughing. Jerry stepped out of the larger group and beckoned Bessie and her father.

"This'll be the place where the fun begins," he said, and a wag added, "and ends, too. He'll never have the grit to go inside after you get through with him here."

"Here he comes," someone said with hushed glee, and Bessie turned to see an extremely tall, well proportioned man coming up the walk. As he came nearer, she became conscious of a certain dignity and confidence about him that were admirable. He was a handsome man with greying temples that made him seem distinguished. His brows were not shaggy, but heavy, and from under them a pair of kindly, penetrating eyes looked forth questioningly as Jerry stepped forth to meet him.

"Mr. Cowdery?" Jerry questioned.

The stranger nodded. "Yes." His voice was pleasingly deep.

The two immediately became the center of a crowding group, struggling to miss nothing of the coming spectacle. Jerry held up the copy of The Book of Mormon he had borrowed from Bessie and her father the night before.

"Do you recognize this book, Mr.

Cowdery?" Jerry asked in an exaggerated officious tone.

Cowdery seemed to recognize that he had run into a trap of some sort, but showed neither worry nor fear. "I do," he said shortly.

"I see your name attached to it," Jerry continued. "I take it from that that you know something about it. If you believe this book to be true, why are you away up here in Michigan?"

Oliver Cowdery straightened and gave Jerry the benefit of a steely glare. "I'm here in the interests of one of my clients."

"And do you actually believe this book?" Jerry demanded.

A great light burst full into Bessie's mind. Jerry was doing this for her. He was going to prove to her that with the prophet dead, there was nothing left to Mormonism. He had recognized what had seemed a heaven sent opportunity, and had seized it avidly. It hadn't struck him as unfair to Oliver Cowdery, or to her. Oliver Cowdery was an apostate with a grudge. He was a man with every reason to hit back at the church if he got a good chance. Jerry hadn't thought of all this. He had thought only of proving the emptiness of Mormon doctrine.

It was tragic for Cowdery. He was faced with loss from every direction. If he ignored the question he would be hooted and jeered and maybe mobbed. If he answered it in the affirmative his case would be hopeless. He aligned himself with a hated sect. If he denied it, he would be shown up for a man whose word was worthless, and as such, unfit for the bar. It was a breathless moment for everybody.

The steely glare in Cowdery's eyes seemed to grow softer. Lines of sorrowful memories gathered about his mouth. He seemed to

have taken himself apart from the gaping crowd.

Jerry repeated his question. "Do you, Mr. Cowdery, believe what is written in this book?"

"No, sir!" the words popped like a pistol shot. A great gasp went up from a hundred throats at the same time.

Jerry grinned triumphantly. "I didn't think so," he said, "but you state here that you believe it, and your signature is attached hereto. Not only that but you state that you saw an angel who showed you the plates from which this book is purported to have been translated. Now which time did you tell the truth, then or now?"

There was not the slightest hesitancy about Cowdery's reply. His words rang with sincerity and truth. "My name is attached to that book because what I there said is true. I did see an angel. He did show me those plates. I know I saw these things, and belief has nothing to do with it, knowing as I do that it is true."

Awe hushed every sound. Tears gathered in Bessie's eyes. This was the thing Jerry and others hadn't counted upon. Pure sacrifice. The man had had nothing to gain by his testimony, had in fact plenty of reason to refute the book in question, but he had held true under fire.

The crowd was breaking up. Stunned with astonishment, Jerry turned and walked slowly up the courthouse steps to defeat.

Late that night, a group of four were gathered about the big table in the parlor at the Gilmores'. Oliver Cowdery was speaking in a queer strained voice that reminded one of tears that couldn't be shed. Jerry and Bessie and her father were hanging breathlessly upon those words.

"With my own hand," he was saying, "I wrote that book, most of it at least, as it fell from the lips of a prophet of God. If you'll read it prayerfully you cannot avoid knowing it is filled with great truths any more than Joseph Smith or I could. Some day, after I have paid the 'uttermost farthing,' God will pour a soothing balm over my smarting soul, and I shall be taken back into the fold. Humbled and crushed, but taken back."

He drew himself suddenly together and became again the dignified lawyer for a moment as he arose from his chair. And then just as suddenly he softened again and

stretched forth his hands to touch the heads of Bessie and Jerry.

"God bless your two young hearts," he murmured in benediction, "and keep them tender toward your fellowmen by a testimony of the divinity of that book for which prophets have died. The truth that speaks now from the dust."

When they looked up the door had closed behind him, but there still remained that sweet influence which had at one time made so powerful a thing of his personality.

Jerry reached over and picked up the Book of Mormon and reverently opened it. "And so ends the biggest day of my life," he said softly. "Let's read a chapter together."

## Twilight

*By Ida R. Alldredge*

The sunset glow fades quickly in the west;  
Bells tinkle as the herd comes home to rest  
And slowly down the path they wend their way  
Ere evening shadows shroud the light of day.

The poplar and the weeping willow trees  
Sigh gently in the balmy summer breeze;  
The fragrant apple blossoms scent the air  
And falling water wafts sweet music everywhere.

One lone star twinkles in the vaulted sky  
As it resumes its vigil up on high—  
Another, then another 'till anon  
Yon canopy is studded, day is gone.

The aura of the lilac lends a mystic spell  
As shadows lengthen over hill and dell  
And twilight slowly shuts from us the light  
Enfolding all the world in arms of night.

