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Old America - Jared

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Abstract: Series of articles dealing with archaeological, anthropological, geographical, societal, religious, and historical aspects of ancient America and their connections to the Book of Mormon, which is the key to understanding “old American” studies.

Old America.

BY G. M. O.

JARED.

THE Creator, having divided the earth, and allowed a short time—some fourteen years—for its composure, continued His work of separation by confounding the language of the people, “swearing in his wrath that they should be scattered upon all the face of the earth, and according to the word of the Lord the people were scattered.” Thus, the descendants of Noah, originally confined to a particular locality and an original unity and equality, are now spread over the whole earth, presenting four leading or distinct types, white, yellow, red and black. Learned ethnologists, ignoring the simplicity of the sacred and inspired records of holy writ, have lost themselves in vague and often absurd theories in their repeated efforts to solve the mystery of the origin of these distinct races, and their first advent upon the globe, but in all their labors they have most signally failed. Into this theme of wide-spread discussion we will not enter, holding to our own belief; that all men were created equal, with God’s image as a model, without any classification or variety of color, but that through wickedness they have brought upon themselves repeated cursings of God, as in the cases of Cain, Ham and Laman, wherein their complexions were changed. Through the influences of climate, mode of living, amalgamation and by adhering to or disregarding the will and commands of an all-wise God, has man advanced or fallen from the exalted state originally conferred upon him; and, instead of presenting one type, as originally intended, speaking one language and forming one great order of brotherhood, we are split up, divided, classified, and marked, so that at the present time the curse of Babel has become a confusion worse confounded.

Leaving the eastern hemisphere to be re-peopled by the numerous tribes and families radiating from Babel, we turn our thoughts to the long un-explained mystery—the re-peopling of America. Until the appearance of the Book of Mormon no reasonable theory or definite historical explanation could be given of the origin of the aboriginal inhabitants of the western portion of our globe. Many and various, rational and irrational, have been the theories advanced to explain the origin of the people who have left their relics scattered over the land. One of these theories is that the original inhabitants were the “ten lost tribes of Israel.” This idea has been defended by some students in elaborate treatises. Originally advanced by the Spanish monks, who assumed also that the gospel was originally preached in America by St. Thomas, it has been taken up by many eminent writers, who have given us long and detailed descriptions of the journey the “tribes” made through Palestine, Syria, in fact, over the extent of Asia, crossing at Behring’s Strait, and thence down the Pacific coast. Lord Kingsborough devotes the major part of one of his immense volumes to the explanation and support of this absurd idea. Another hypothesis, equally absurd, is that civilization was brought to America by the Malays. A few investigators maintain that the first inhabitants came originally from Phoenicia, and M. de Bourbourg and some other writers hold to what may be called the “Atlanta” theory. They suppose the continent of America to have extended originally far across the Atlantic ocean, in a peninsula shape, but at some time in the world’s history this extended portion was engulfed

by some convulsion of nature, thus separating the two hemispheres more effectually, and the Atlantic people who escaped destruction settled in Central America. In, fact, the claims of zealous writers attribute the original source of the Americans to almost every prominent nation of the old world, the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Israelites, Arabs, Egyptians, Celts, Hindoos, Tartars, Scythians, Coreans, Samoieds and Tungusians.

In the midst of all these conflicting and jarring accounts and statements let us examine the simple, plain, unvarnished record of Ether, as we find it in the Book of Mormon. Here we learn that when the Lord confounded the language at Babel He led forth a colony under the leadership of Jared and his brother. As He had guided the ark across the stormy waters before, as He led the children of Israel over the burning sands of Arabia afterwards, so He guided the few people chosen to repopulate a land “choice above all the earth.” The record informs us that after a journey in the wilderness, compelling them at times to build barges on which they crossed many rivers, they finally, after a four years’ sojourn, constructed vessels and sailed—we infer from some point on the Mediterranean coast of Africa, possibly from the Atlantic coast now called Morocco—to America, and established themselves as colonists in the central part of the western continents.

Ether has recorded the history of the rise, progress and decay of Jared and his people, but the people of this age of the world look upon the book containing his record as a myth, and still hold to their various theories and speculations. Let us take up the secular histories, in which all believe, and see how far the Book of Ether is sustained by the traditions and the few records preserved of the descendants of this colony who landed in the country some three thousand years ago.

Three great events had already transpired in the world’s history of so much importance that they could never be forgotten, never lost from the memory of man, as long as tongue could speak or hand record—the creation of man, the deluge and the confusion of languages. Going back from son to father, it never has been forgotten; going into the future from father to son, it never will be forgotten. Let us see how well the old Americans have preserved the memory of these epochs, that point so undeniably to the source of their information.

The Toltec painting of the deluge and confusion of tongues, an engraving of which can be found in “Humboldt’s Mexico,” also in Priest’s Antiquities, and Clavigero’s History of Mexico, was painted in a manuscript book made of the leaves of a tree, suitable for the purpose. The picture represents Noah floating in a canoe, or boat: over Noah is a mountain, the summit crowned by a tree; to the left, rising above the waters, another mountain or peak is seen, crowned by a horn. This is a hieroglyphic denoting the mountain Colhucan (Ararat). At the foot of the mountain, supporting the tree, are two heads—Noah and his wife. A dove rests in the tree, from whose beak branches the Toltec figure of speech or language. Fifteen figures of men are approaching, and receiving the language from the bird; it is supposed these figures represent the heads of families, or leaders of fifteen tribes. One remarkable feature in this picture is, that the figures have no resemblance to the Indians, but seem to be a transcript of a group of ancient Greeks or Romans. This presentation of a Caucasian assembly, is strong evidence that the present Indian is not a representative of the first inhabitants of America.

Clavigero states that the Chiapanese Indians had a manuscript, in which it was written “that a person named Votan was present at the building (of the Tower of Babel) in order

to mount to heaven, and that then every people received the various languages."

The ancient Indians of Cuba, called Caribs, learned from their ancestors that God created heaven and earth and all things: that an old man, having foreseen the deluge, built a canoe and embarked in it, with his family and many animals. When the waters abated he sent forth a raven, which never returned; he then sent a pigeon, which soon returned with a branch of the hoba tree. The old man and family then disembarked, and, having made wine of grapes produced after the flood, became intoxicated. While in this condition, one of his sons exposed his nakedness, and another covered him. When he awoke, the Lord blessed the latter, and cursed the former. The Caribs held that they were the descendants of the son who was cursed.

(To be Continued.)

SAND AND VOLCANOES.

BY BETH.

SOME very interesting and instructive papers have appeared respecting our western Territories,* which deserve to be reproduced in full, for the large amount of valuable information they contain concerning this region. Lack of space forbids this, but many facts may be stated that will enable the young reader to know something of the natural operations that have produced, and still continue to produce changes in these valleys. Prominent among the silent forces noticed, we find that sand is making its mark upon our rocks in a very remarkable manner. It is shown that the action of sand is capable of producing marked changes, by cutting and abrading, when moved by water or by air; and that forcible illustrations of both phases of its action are common in our western Territories. The function of flowing water in denudation, or uncovering by removing rock, is also shown to be three-fold. It dissolves rock; it carries the sand which cuts rock; and it carries away the materials. Mere solution does scarcely anything in effecting changes; it is water containing sand or mud that does the work, especially when floods pass through gorges with great rapidity. Even the boulders that choke the channel are themselves gradually worn away by the incessant action of this small but effective "tool of erosion"—sand. Much more is said of the action of sand in water, by which the beds of rivers are "beautifully carved, each texture of rock being given a peculiar pattern of sculpture, but none escaping." And the magnitude of the excavations accomplished in our western rivers by the "devouring sand" is astonishing. This we might be prepared to expect, as we all know something of sand and water, in scouring for instance. But dry sand, carried by the wind, is another mighty factor in shaping our rocks. "By its multitudinous impact and friction, it triturates and erodes all substances that come in its way, reducing them and its own particles to a fine dust, that drifts lightly here and there, until it is caught at last by some transient or permanent stream, and finds the bottom of a lake or ocean. Of this attrition the most conspicuous traces are seen on the rocks of mountain passes, and on the pebbles of open plains. The carving of rocks in passes, where the wind is focussed, by the convergence of slopes, to exceptional intensity, is a frequent phenomenon."

Many of our readers are doubtless familiar with the singular appearance of rocks and pebbles found from time to time. The writer alludes to some of these at the locality of the Rio Virgen. "A smooth and gently sloping plain is strewn with carved pebbles of various rocks. The quartzites and flints are smooth, and shine with a polish that attrition by rolling never gives. The basalts and trachytes have uneven surfaces, with the harder crystals in the prominences. . . . All combinations of hard and soft, as of schist and limestone, exhibit the harder bands in bold relief; while homogeneous and soft pebbles, and especially those of limestone, are carved superficially into vermicular ridges and grooves of the most exquisite arabesque patterns. . . . Only the pebbles at the surface exhibit the carving; all below are merely rounded by rolling and jostling against each other in the current that originally brought them. The sand blast that causes the surface pebbles ultimately destroys them completely, and their whole material is swept away to the adjacent rivers."

How graphically are the changes wrought by the tiny "sand blast," one of natures most effective forces, shown. Plains are degraded; "as one layer disappears from the surface, another is brought to view to be similarly treated."

The writer also says that many of our volcanoes are comparatively recent. He proves this by showing that eruptions of basalt have taken place near Fillmore, in this Territory, recently, as proved by the superposition or overlay of newly deposited beds on older ones of lava; and he advances the theory that is now generally received that geysers are springs combining a very high temperature, which can only be adequately accounted for by supposing that their heat is derived from the water passing over masses of lava still hot, and hence, of recent origin. He shows that much of the scoria, or volcanic cinder, has not even undergone decomposition by the natural action of the atmosphere, moisture, etc., which it must have done if it had been of great antiquity. He believes that the period of eruption should be measured by hundreds rather than by thousands of years, and that "it is more logical for us to believe that we live in one of the intervals between outbursts, than that the phenomena of volcanoes have ceased."

Living as we do in this Territory, should the predictions of the able naturalist and writer be verified, we may some day be startled by something more than the distant rumblings in the mountains: he says "I see no reason to suppose even that the end is near, and shall feel no surprise when the fires burst forth anew."

THREE-FOURTHS of the difficulties and miseries of men come from the fact that most want wealth without earning it, fame without deserving it, popularity without temperance, respect without virtue, and happiness without holiness. The man who wants the best things, and is willing to pay just what they are worth, by honest effort and hard self-denial, will have no difficulty in getting what he wants last. It is the men who want goods on credit that are disappointed and overwhelmed in the end. Happiness cannot be bought by the bottle. It does not exist in any exhilaration, excitement or ownership, but comes from the use of the faculties of body and mind.

NECESSITY is the mother of invention and encouragement the nurse of it; what is brought up by one, should be propagated by the other.

IT is our own vanity that makes the vanities of others intolerable to us,

*Advance Papers on Natural Erosion by Sand, and the Recency of Certain Volcanoes of the Western United States.