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The Land Zarahemla (Continued)

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Abstract: Identifies an area in Bogata, Columbia as the Land of Zarahemla. Presents photographs and a description of the geography, climate, and vegetation of the area, drawing parallels with passages of the Book of Mormon text.



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THE LAND ZARAHEMLA.

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CLIMATE AND PRODUCTS.



HERE is probably no other region in the world that enjoys such favorable and such varieties of climate as does the land of Zarahemla. The promise of the Lord to Lehi to give to his posterity a land choice above all the lands of the earth was fulfilled in this region, for we do not think there is another spot on earth so desirable to a people capable of enjoying it.

The year is divided into four seasons of three months each, two wet, and two dry. Violent storms of wind and rain are rare in the upper valleys, but in the forest region and in the Land Bountiful storms accompanied by thunder and lightning of extreme violence are frequent. During the wet season the rain falls in gentle showers and usually at stated times. The wet season is the season of growth. The first rainfall is the signal for planting, which is done in the most primitive manner. The harvest takes place at the return of the dry season.

In the lands Manti, Minon, and Zarahemla the mean temperature is about 82 degrees, the range of the thermometer will rarely exceed ten degrees during the year. This seems almost incredible to residents of Utah where it is not an uncommon thing to see the mercury drop fifty degrees within a few hours.

The plains of Zarahemla are between 800 and 900 feet above sea level near the Sidon, and rise gradually as they slope back towards the great mountains 25 or 30 miles distant. Just north of the plains is a flat topped hill or mesa rising about 500 feet. As slight as this elevation is there is a very great difference in the climate, due to the fact that the mesa catches the constant eastern breezes, which greatly modify the climate. There are numerous signs of a former occupation on the mesa, and we think it probable that the wealthier classes of Zarahemla had their homes there.

On the mountain slopes to the west where Melek was located, one can find any climate he may wish. The slopes rise gradually for a dozen miles or more, and every 100 feet of rise makes a perceptible difference in the temperature, so that on the mountain one will find all climates from tropical to frigid, and these conditions are constant, from generation to generation. Indications are that these slopes were a favorite place of residence for the Nephites. Evidences of a numerous population are still to be seen, and the mountain sides for seventy-five miles northward were denuded of timber to make room for the fields of the old people. And what a paradise this was to live in. No chilling blasts of winter; no burning winds of summer, but always the same gentle breeze and even temperature, trees always green

and flowers always in bloom. No flies or mosquitoes to annoy, or reptiles to harm, and yet there is something to mar one's happiness even in this earthly Eden. There are fleas there and niguas, the latter a microscopic insect that burrows under your toe nails and makes himself at home there. He is exceedingly prolific and soon becomes a colony and then a nation. A native removes him with a pin or a needle as soon as his presence becomes known, to

100 miles away. Southward are the grass-covered plains, and beyond the valley, filling the entire horizon for more than 200 miles, is the great mass of the eastern mountains. In the valley of Gideon the mean temperature is 72 degrees, and the range less than 6 degrees. In the valley of Bogota the mean temperature is 60 degrees with a range of 10. These conditions prevail in other districts of a like altitude.



THE PLAINS OF ZARAHEMLA.

save his toe. Neither fleas or niguas are friends to cleanliness, and need not be seriously feared.

A perfect climate, with sparkling streams of pure cold water is not the only advantages at Melek. The scene from the slopes is beautiful beyond compare. At one's feet are the plains of Zarahemla and the great forest region extending northward until lost in the dim distance more than

The products in such a country are governed, of course, by climatic conditions prevailing in the various valleys. In the Minon valley for example, almost every tropic fruit or vegetable or grain known can be produced. At Melek one could have his home at a point where the thermometer remained almost constantly at 70 degrees, and in an hour's time could drive down to where oranges, bananas, figs, pineapples,

etc. grew midst fields of cane and cotton, or in a like time could ascend to heights where wheat, oats, and barley thrived, with fruits and plants of a similar clime. In a market there one could find every day in the year, almost every known fruit or vegetable—strawberries, raspberries, apples and pears from the heights, and oranges, plantains and mangos, etc. from the valley.

We have often wondered how it was possible for the Nephites to so soon recover from the effects of a disastrous war, but it is not at all remarkable when conditions there are understood. Four crops of corn can be grown on the same ground in one year under favorable conditions. Sugar cane continues to grow eighteen years from one planting, and will yield two good crops a year. It requires nine months to obtain a crop of plantains from the planting, and Horton estimates that one acre will sustain 240 people. Grasses from which hemp can be produced grow almost everywhere. Gold and silver are abundant in the country. In the hills between Zarahemla and Minon is one of the richest silver mines in the world, while the sands of every stream which come down off the western mountains carry gold. That mining operations on a large scale were carried on by the ancient inhabitants is shown by the evidences which still remain. That they possessed gold in abundance is shown by its presence in their old tombs. For more than 350 years the Spaniards have been engaged in robbing these graves, and the work still goes on; so extensive is this work of spoliation that all the leading merchants bid for the finds. At Zipiquira, north of Bogota, are extensive deposits of rock salt which have been worked for many hundreds of years, as is indicated by the evidences which may still be seen. Deposits of iron and copper are found in all the mountain region. An industrious people in that region today would soon accumulate wealth, just as the Nephites did.

For a time we could not explain the presence of the numerous terraces on the mountain slopes, when it seemed to us the valley was the most desirable place to live. The reason is plain when it is understood that in all of this region wheat does not thrive below 3,000 feet above sea level nor above 8,000 feet. Barley does not thrive below 7,000 feet nor above 10,000 feet. These grains were had by the Nephites, and we are told were grown by them in lands Nephi and Shilom, which places the altitude of those cities between 7,000 and 8,000 feet above the sea, which agrees with the elevation of the valleys of northern Ecuador where those cities were located. This fact also explains the terraces on the mountain slopes in the land Zarahemla.

A traveler in the country is impressed with the similarity of Indian customs to those we have read about in Bible history. One sees the same crude methods of spinning and weaving; fields are plowed in the same manner, grain is cut with a sickle, and is threshed by driving a drove of sheep around a post about which the grain has been spread. The straw is removed and the chaff thrown into the air, is carried away by the wind. The grain is ground by hand by means of stone grinders. Their clothing and shoes are like those worn by the ancient Jews. Molasses and wine is still carried in sheep skin bottles. Miles and leagues are unknown terms to the Indian, he measures distance by hours' journey and days' journey, as did his ancestors.

It is absolutely necessary to pave the roads which traverse the high mountains on account of the heavy rain-fall. Roads often followed the summits of mountain ridges for long distances, and have been used so long that they are worn down into deep gulleys. The slopes of the lower mountain ridges are usually covered by dense thickets, and as the first inhabitants traveled along the lines of least resistance they took to the ridges. This explains why

Limhi's company passed by the inhabited parts of Zarahemla and made the journey into North America. They followed the



AN ANCIENT AMERICAN MUMMY.

summit of the western mountain and thus passed by the Nephite cities.

Some day the remains of the great highway which lead through the narrow pass

into the land northward will be found, and when it is it will be located along the mountain ridges.

The old people embalmed their dead and buried them in tombs after the manner of the ancient Egyptians, except that they were embalmed in a sitting position.

The eastern custom of holding a market where buyer and seller met to exchange their wares, still prevails in the country.

In studying the movements of Lamanite armies we must take into account the arctic barriers which surrounded the land Zarahemla. Alma describes the Lamanite soldiers as naked except a girdle of skins about their loins. People thus attired were inhabitants of warm regions, and it would be but natural for them to avoid as far as possible the cold mountain summits; for to be caught in a storm in those high elevations would mean death. In almost every instance Zarahemla was invaded by way of the pass at the head of the Sidon, which as we have seen was lower than any pass in the whole Andean range from Patagonia to the Caribbean sea. The existence of a pass at that point, or whether the mountains were at all accessible to travel, could not have been known to Joseph Smith seventy-five years ago.

Joel Ricks.

WEIMAR.

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THE HISTORICAL PLACES. THE HOME OF FRANZ LISZT.



IN a new building near to the Palace, are preserved the Goethe and Schiller archives, for the purpose of study only. The fine equestrian statue of Carl August near by ever reminds those of today of what that great ruler did for Weimar.

The Grand Ducal Library in the Grune Schloss (Palace) contains two hundred thousand volumes and eight thousand maps, among them two celebrated old maps of America (1527—1529). They are drawn on a large scale upon parchment. There are also between four and five thousand genealogical works.

The principal room is decorated with a number of busts and portraits of celebrated men and women, most of whom have re-