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## William Smith's Story Concerning the Plates of the Book of Mormon

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**Abstract:** An interview that took place two weeks before the death of William Smith, wherein Smith avows that he did indeed lift the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated.

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# WILLIAM SMITH'S STORY CONCERNING THE PLATES OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

Note:

Two weeks before his death, William Smith, brother of Joseph Smith the Prophet, had a conversation with two interested persons. The questions asked him are omitted for lack of space here. Otherwise there is no change in the matter, which appeared in the *Deseret News*, Jan. 20, 1894. Here is what William Smith said about his early home life on the old farm in Manchester, western New York.

I did not see them [the plates] uncovered, but I handled them and hefted them while wrapped in a tow frock, and judged them to have weighed about sixty pounds. I could tell they were plates of some kind and that they were fastened together by rings running through the back. Father and my brother Samuel saw them as I did while they were in the frock. So did Hyrum and others in the family [This frock] was his everyday frock, such as young men used then to wear. Father asked if he might not be permitted to see the plates, and Joseph, putting his hand on them, said, "No: I am instructed not to show them to anyone. If I do, I will transgress and lose them again." We did not care to have him break the commandment and suffer as he did before.

We all had the most implicit confidence in what he said. He was a truthful boy. Father and mother believed him, why should not the children? I suppose if he had told crooked stories about other things, we might have doubted his word about the plates, but Joseph was a truthful boy. That father and mother believed his report and suffered persecution for that belief, shows that he was truthful. We never doubted his word for a moment.

We never heard such a thing [that Joseph was lazy] until after Joseph told his vision, and not then, by our friends. . . . We cleared sixty acres of the heaviest timber I ever saw. We had a good place. We also had on it from twelve to fifteen hundred sugar trees, and to gather the sap and make molasses from that number of trees was no lazy job. If you will figure up how much work it would take to clear sixty acres of heavy timber land, . . . trees you could not conveniently cut

down, you can tell whether we were lazy or not, and Joseph did his share of the work with the rest of the boys.

We always had family prayers, since I can remember. I well remember father used to carry his spectacles in his vest pocket, and when us boys saw him feel for his specs, we knew that was a signal to get ready for prayer, and if we did not notice it, mother would say, "William," or whoever was the negligent one, "get ready for prayer." After the prayer we had a song we would sing; I remember part of it yet.

Another day has passed and gone,  
We lay our garments by.

Hyrum, Samuel, Katherine and Mother were members of the Presbyterian Church. My father would not join. He did not like it because a Rev. Stockton had preached my brother's funeral sermon and intimated that he had gone to hell, for Alvin was not a church member, but he was a good boy, and my father did not like it.

There was a joint revival in the neighborhood, between Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians, and they had succeeded in stirring up quite a feeling, and after the meeting the question arose, which church should have the converts? Reverend Stockton was the president of the meeting and suggested that it was their meeting and under their care, and they had a church there, and they ought to join the Presbyterians; but as father did not like Reverend Stockton very well, our folks hesitated and the next evening a Rev. Mr. Lane of the Methodists preached a sermon on "what Church shall I join"? The burden of his discourse was to ask God, using as his text, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally." And of course, when Joseph went home and was looking over the text, he was impressed to do just what the preacher had said.

## LET LIFE BE LOVELY

*By Christie Lund*

Let not your life be a discordant thing,  
A constant struggle and a fight;  
Let it be lovely as a flower  
Unfolding to the light.

Let it be glorious as a song  
Borne on the wings of dawn;  
As expectant as the waiting world  
When the night has gone.

Oh, do not bear your burdens over-long  
With grace endow this day, this hour;  
Let them be glorious as a song  
Let them be lovely as a flower.