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Editorial Thoughts

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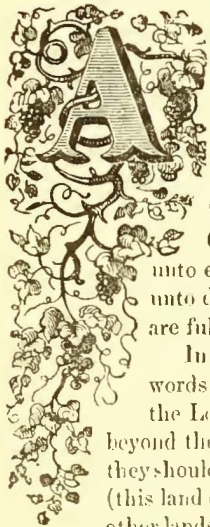
Abstract: Editorial reflections on the Book of Mormon concepts of America as the choicest of lands and the necessity for righteousness for its inhabitants. Discusses secret combinations.

The Juvenile Instructor.

GEORGE Q. CANNON, - - - - - EDITOR.

SALT LAKE CITY, MARCH 1, 1876.

EDITORIAL THOUGHTS.



ALL the prophets in the Book of Mormon who have spoken about this land of America have said that it shall be a blessed land unto the righteous, but to the wicked it should be cursed. The words of the prophet Alma, the second, are very plain upon this subject. Let us quote them. "And he said, thus saith the Lord God: Cursed shall be the land, yea, this land, unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, unto destruction, which do wickedly, when they are fully ripe."

In the Book of Ether we find the following words in reference to this same subject: "And the Lord would not suffer that they should stop beyond the sea in the wilderness, but he would that they should come forth even unto the land of promise, (this land of America) which was choice above all other lands which the Lord God had preserved for a righteous people; and he had sworn in his wrath unto the brother of Jared, that whoso should possess this land of promise, from that time henceforth and forever, should serve him, the true and only God, or they should be swept off when the fulness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fulness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity; for behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God, or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God. And it is not until the fulness of iniquity among the children of the land, that they are swept off. And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God, that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fulness come, that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you, as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done. Behold, this a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it, shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, who has been manifested by the things which we have written."

We have quoted these passages because they are so plain and pointed. There are others like them in the Book of Mormon which we need not quote now. They all go to prove that no nation can practice wickedness for any great length of time on this land without receiving punishment; and if they will not repent before they go too far, they will be destroyed. We are made to think of these words and promises of God by what we see around us at the present time in this nation. What is the condition of the people now? Is the wrath of God likely to fall upon them? We wish that we could truthfully answer, No. But we cannot. Wickedness has been growing and spreading. Since the Latter-day Saints were driven from their homes time after time, since many of them were murdered, and especially the great prophet which the Lord raised up, who, with his brother, was so cruelly slain, violence and wrong have been increasing. It is no wonder that this is the case. Those

who committed those dreadful crimes have never been punished for them; they have never, even, been condemned. The bulk of the people have seemed to think that the Latter-day Saints got no more than they deserved. Some probably thought it was a great outrage to kill the prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum in so dastardly a manner; but the greater number of the people thought they were impostors, and it made but little difference how they were killed, so that they were removed out of the way. Man having failed to punish the people who committed these crimes, their punishment is left to the Lord. He is just and true. When He sends forth a prophet, and the people slay the prophet, they must bear the consequences of that act. Nothing but deep and heartfelt repentance can save them from His anger. Everywhere around us in this nation we see the results of those evil deeds. We have had a bloody civil war. Union and peace fled from the people. The war came to an end; but peace and union did not return. No sooner has one difficulty been settled than another has broken out. Men hope for better times; but they do not come. To-day no man can look at the condition of the nation with impartial eyes without being saddened at the prospect before it. But cannot the nation yet be saved from the anger of God? Is it too late and have they gone too far? We firmly believe they could escape now if they would. But it would require thorough, heartfelt repentance.

Considerable anxiety is now beginning to be felt concerning the presidential election. Next November this takes place. Whom will the people choose? Much depends upon their choice. If they arise in their might, determined to put down corruption and wrong-doing, and select a man for President who will faithfully and honestly and fairly discharge the duties of that office, affairs will be more favorable. Wickedness, misrule and oppression may receive a check. But if an unjust man be elected, who will abuse his power, trample upon the rights of the people, uphold iniquity and aid the wicked, then the nation will have increased cause to mourn.

At the present time secret combinations exist in many places in this country. These "rings," of which we hear so much in the newspapers, are combinations of this character. Men are banded together to get gain, to get power, and to accomplish their various schemes. They work together in secret. They help one another, and it is almost impossible to reach them or to prove anything against them. This corruption is widespread. It exists in high places in the land, and it almost defies the laws. Occasionally a little of it is exposed, a small corner is brought to light; but not to any extent or for any length of time. It is soon covered up again. Adulteries, seductions and whoredoms abound; but if any of them are discovered, there is a great effort made to conceal or smooth them over. Society is shocked at the exposure, and they think them too dreadful to be talked about, and for the sake of society, they are put out of sight as quickly as possible.

These "rings" and secret combinations will, if not checked and broken up, prove the destruction of this nation. Many people desire to see them overthrown; but they have not the power to accomplish this. The members of them have possession of too many places of trust and authority to be easily handled. One sticks by another, defends and aids another, and this is done so secretly that detection is defied. A strong, pure man at the head of the government, with good, faithful men around him, might be able to break up these combinations and "rings." But if such men are not placed in power, this nation is doomed. This is not man's word or man's opinion; it is God's truth, revealed as plainly as the light, through the

prophet Joseph in the Book of Mormon. Already two mighty nations who lived upon this land have been destroyed by means of "rings" and secret combinations, and our own nation will share a similar fate if they are not broken up. The worst feature is, they are spreading. One combination begets another. They have various objects to accomplish. But the ends at which all aim, are money and power. To obtain these, advantage is taken of secrecy. The laws are trampled upon. Men help each other. One wants to gain one point, he gets the help of others, and they in their turn gets his help to accomplish their designs. At the beginning they probably are careful; but they go from one degree of guilt to another until they stop at nothing, not even murder itself. In this next presidential election combinations already existing, and others that will be formed, will wield enormous power. It is a question to-day whether the masses of this country can give expression to their will respecting the man they would like to be President; it is more than likely that the election will be controlled by these combinations.

Children, examine the Book of Mormon and see how wonderfully the Lord is fulfilling His word, and then we know you will be thankful that you are Latter-day Saints and that you are permitted to dwell in Zion.

THE CROCODILE.

There is nothing very attractive about the appearance of the Crocodile, as seen in its natural state, basking in the sun along the banks of streams in tropical countries, with its huge mouth wide open. And our readers will wonder, when looking at the picture, how any human being could be so foolish or ignorant as to worship such a repulsive looking creature. Yet we read that, anciently the Crocodile was an object of religious worship in Egypt, that land of mystery, of which so little is known. Then the ancient Egyptians were in the habit of preserving the bodies of these frightful reptiles by embalming them and carefully putting them away in sacred places.

There are several varieties of the reptile; that pictured in the engraving is the Crocodile of the river Nile, in Egypt. The American varieties are the *Crocodilus Americana*, of Florida, and the *Alligator Mississippiensis*, of the Mississippi. Along many of the rivers in South America and in some parts of the Southern States the Crocodile, or Alligator, as it is usually called, may be seen lying as if asleep with its jaws extended as widely as possible, and swarms of flies or gnats filling its capacious mouth. Then it may be seen frequently to let the upper jaw or lid of its huge fly-trap fall on the unsuspecting swarms, and they are gulped down with evident relish.

Crocodiles do not seem to be at all fastidious about their food, for although they are known to prey upon fishes and warm-blooded animals, they will not refuse flesh when in an advanced state of putrefaction; in fact, it is asserted by some writers that they prefer their food in that condition, and often hide their prey to return to it when it is quite rotten. Then some kinds do not scruple to attack a man when they have a chance and, if possible, make a meal of him. But, what will seem more strange than all to you, they sometimes make a repast of stones. It is said they do this to assist digestion.

But we must tell you about the little bird, resembling a plover, that is seen in the mouth of the Crocodile. It is a well known fact that this bird may frequently be seen, as illustrated, in the mouth of the Crocodile; but there is a difference of opinion about the office it fills there, some writers claim that it picks from the mouth of its huge friend certain insects that infest it, and others, that it feeds upon matter that accumulates around the teeth of the Crocodile. It is very likely it performs some service for the reptile for which it expects in return impunity from harm by the uplifted jaw, otherwise it would not hop around in the Crocodile's mouth with such an air of perfect security.

In these valleys we have a species of lizard known as the "Mountain Alligator" (*Heloderma Suspectus*), this is a curious animal and is considered by some naturalists as a connecting link with the ancient saurians that at one time swarmed upon this continent.

