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Conversions THROUGH THE BOOK OF MORMON

JOHN HENRY EVANS

IV *In England*

John Wells and Arthur Winter were two boys whom everyone looked upon as twins, though they were not in any way related. They lived in Nottingham, England.



JOHN WELLS

Born there about the same time, they played in each other's back yard, went to the same school, attended the same church (the Church of England), and later,

when it came time for them to go to work, they got jobs in the same lace factory, where they received many promotions.

Only once in seventeen years were these "twins" separated for any length of time. That was when Arthur left Nottingham and went, with his parents, to live in another town. But he returned, and when he did so, he resumed his old job at a desk opposite John's. It was a happy reunion. He had changed, however, in one respect, for meantime he had become a Mormon.

Now, the Mormons, unfortunately, had a bad reputation in Nottingham, as indeed they had everywhere else. This was because they were not known for what they really were. In that city, though, there was a flourishing branch of the Latter-day Saints, but they were taboo to such fastidious persons as John Wells. And so Arthur kept his connection with the Mormons a deep secret for a time from his friend.

But he cautiously fished for John's opinion on the subject of the new faith. He would drop hints—which his companion did not understand. For instance, one morning he nonchalantly tossed on to John's desk a recent copy of *The Deseret News*, a Mormon publica-

tion in Salt Lake City, with the remark, "There's a paper from America. Look it over and tell me what you think of it."

John picked up the paper, looked at the heading, saw that it was from Utah, where the Mormons lived, and tossed it back, with only a grunt of disapproval.

It finally leaked out, however, that Arthur was a Mormon. That had come about through his persistent refusal to attend church any more. John was very much shocked. The incident came nearly disrupting their friendship.

Time passed, and John became sick. He had a bad case of pernicious anemia. The factory owner thought John ought to take a two weeks' vacation, with pay, and go to the Isle of Man. And that is what John did.

On the beach there, one morning early, he thought he would like to read. So, reaching into his carpet-bag, he pulled out a book. It was the Book of Mormon! Someone had played a practical joke on him. Nothing daunted, however, he began to read it.

Now, the Book of Mormon is not couched in the best English in the world. This is because Joseph Smith was not a school-trained man and knew little of the graces of composition at the time of his translation. And John was somewhat hypercritical 'in matters of language. So he threw down the volume in disgust.

As he did so, however, he says he heard a voice saying distinctly, "Read the book!"

He looked around, to see who it was that spoke.

Not a soul was in sight. He was alone.

Obediently he picked up the volume once more, with exactly the same result, and again he threw it down in disgust.

Thereupon the same voice spoke a second time, "Read the book!"

A third time he took up the volume. But instead of beginning with the first page, as he had done the other two times, he opened it at random to one of the last pages. And this is what his eyes fell upon:

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

It was the word "not" here that struck him, he says. It was a challenge to his sincerity in religion, to his faith in Christ, to his inherent love of truth.

He read the book from cover to cover.

When he returned from his enforced vacation, he looked up the Mormons and was baptized.

That is the first half of John Wells's story. The other half is equally interesting.

One of the teachings of the Mormons in those days was the idea of "gathering." In foreign countries converts were supposed to go

to "Zion," which was then in Utah. Already Arthur Winter had gone to the City of the Saints, and was corresponding with his friend in England. And so John, too, got the "spirit of gathering," as the phrase went in those days, and told his employer about his intention to emigrate to America.

By this time, it should be said that he had meanwhile married, and the couple had two children.

The owner of the factory labored with his employee to get him to stay.

"John," he said, "I'll make you a proposition. Stay here and I'll let you name your own salary; I'll build you a house to cost whatever you say and in any part of the city; and on top of all that I'll give you an eighth interest in the business. What do you say?"

John said, "No!"

In Salt Lake City he stayed with his friend Arthur, who had emigrated sometime previously, till he could get a job. Arthur, an expert stenographer by this time, had a good position.

Day after day, month after month, John walked the streets, inquiring everywhere for work—no matter what. It was not generally known that he had occupied a high position in the Nottingham lace factory, for John Wells was a very modest man.

At long last he got a job at a shoe factory. It was putting polish on shoes after they had been made and were ready for sale!

But he took it. The job brought him in something.

Later he got work in another place as a bookkeeper, for he had studied accounting, in which he was expert.

From one position of honor to another he rose steadily, till, when he died not long ago, he was one of the Presiding Bishopric of the Church.

Thus John Wells proved that his conversion to Mormonism was genuine. He made what is called in religious circles a "sacrifice" for his convictions—the final test of sincerity and genuineness.

Solace Song

Minnie I. Hodapp

When solace sweetens sorrow
And sanctifies life's ill,
Faith in a kind tomorrow
Joy's essence doth instill.

When solace sweetens sorrow
And mitigates grief's gloom,
Dark clouds a radiance borrow,
Hope-flowers brightly bloom.

When solace sweetens sorrow
A fair-soft-plumaged dove
Makes dear each dawning morrow
On wings of peace and love!