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## Metal Plates in the British Museum

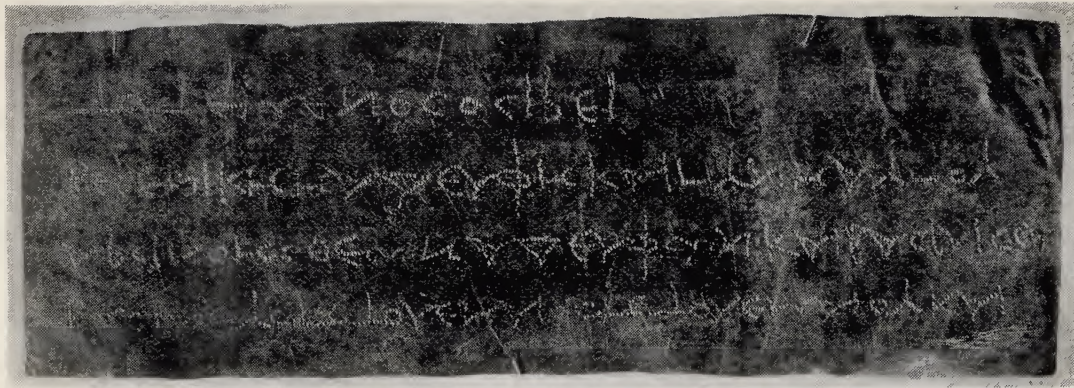
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**Abstract:** Research has shown that the Egyptians, Hebrews, and Greeks used tablets of metal to record important documents. The Inca-ruled natives of Peru and the Aztecs of Mexico engraved records on metal sheets. Engraved records are also found among relics of North American Indians. The British Museum possesses a set of twenty-five silver plates containing Buddha's first sermon and a gold tablet containing the dedication of the temple to Osiris by Ptolemy Eureregetes, 242-222 B.C.



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British Museum

Engraved Gold Tablet of the Second Century B. C., discovered under the foundation stone of a temple at Canopies, Egypt, in 1818. The engravings are in Greek.

# METAL PLATES IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

By GORDON B. HINCKLEY

MENTION of the engraving of records on metal is made in the Old Testament as well as in the Book of Maccabees in the Apocrypha. Research in ancient history has shown conclusively that the Egyptians, Hebrews and Greeks used tablets of metal to record important documents. Ethnologists have gathered evidence which demonstrates that the Inca-ruled natives of Peru and the Aztecs of Mexico had a knowledge of the smelting of metals and that in some cases they engraved records on sheets of metal. Engraved records have been found even among the relics of North American Indians.

And yet, in the face of this evidence, there are a great many people who cannot see as reasonable the assertion made by Joseph Smith that the records from which the Book of Mormon was translated were engraved on gold tablets.

But a visit to the British Museum in London should shake the incredulity of these people.

In this great archive of the British Commonwealth, among specimens gathered from the breadth of the earth, is a collection of oriental books and manuscripts. In case C of this collection is a particularly fascinating group of old records. Small, thin slabs of polished wood, their edges slightly warped with age, are artistically painted with strange looking language characters. Glistening ivory sheets bear finely tooled writings. Among the lot is a thin gold plate engraved on both sides. But of special interest is a set of twenty-five silver plates. Approximately two inches wide by eighteen

inches long, they have two holes cut through their centers through which, apparently, rings or rods were once run to hold them together. The description card in the case reads:

"A Pali manuscript in the Sinhalese character, containing the *Dhammachakkappacattana Sutta*, Buddha's first sermon preached at Benares, and the *Chulakammavibhanga Sutta*. Beautifully engraved on 25 leaves of silver. Early 19th century."

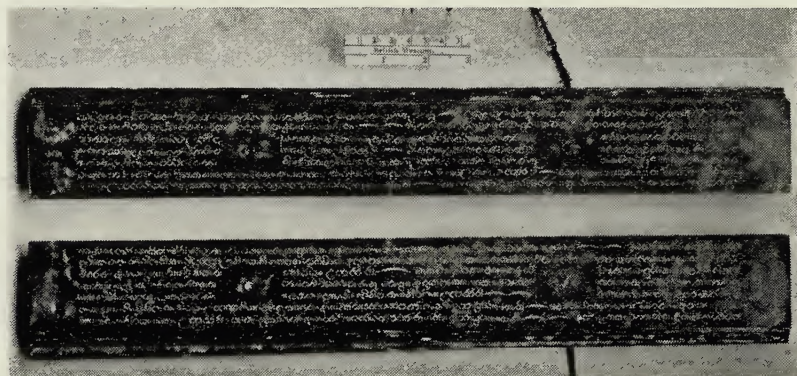
But perhaps even more interesting for those who refuse to believe the story of the Book of Mormon plates is a piece to be seen in the Jewelry Room of the Museum. It is in a case containing Late Greek Jewelry,

4th to 1st century, B. C. Of thin gold, approximately two inches wide by six inches long, it is engraved with Greek characters. The card of description reads:

"Gold tablet with dedication of Temple to Osiris by Ptolemy Euergetes—1, and Berenice, B. C. 242-222.

"Discovered under foundation stone of a temple at Canopus, Egypt, in 1818 and presented by Mahomet Ali to Sir Sidney Smith."

*A Pali manuscript in the sinhalese character showing two of twenty-five leaves of silver which contain Buddha's first sermon preached at Benares.*



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