



Type: Magazine Article

The "Golden Bible."

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Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (January 1910), pp. 214–218

Published by: Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association

The "Golden Bible."

BY S. A. KENNER.

To the making of books there is no end. I don't know who wrote this originally, nor does it matter. It is strikingly true, and the truthfulness of it must occasionally appeal to those who have handled books all their lives, as well as to those who only look at them now and then.

The writer of these lines has done some little reading of a rather diversified character; and while by no means among those who are properly classed as well read, and while no doubt behind many in the scope and magnitude of reading, he has still, for instance, done enough in the line indicated to know that *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Innocents Abroad* are not by the same author, nor even by contemporaneous authors; also that *Baxter's Saints' Rest* is not a humorous production, nor much of anything else that is interesting. All this is thrown in to let the reader know that with all the reading that can be done, going, or trying to go, through the great mass of *lex scriptæ* produced by the human family, or any considerable part of it, is too much like trying to fix the limit of the stars in the firmament or the number of people who have appeared upon the earth since Adam and Eve went into and out of the Garden of Eden. The effort would be futile, the time spent upon it worse than wasted.

Finding myself in the reading department of an old-time friend I noticed a little red book on the table, and on picking it up found it to be entitled *The Golden Bible*. The name, but not the volume, had previously been seen and some surprise was expressed thereat, which was increased upon receiving the information that it had been extant for several years and had been quite extensively read. It was by Rev. M. T. Lamb, and dealt exclusively with the Book of Mormon. It was looked over as carefully and extensively

as time and circumstances would permit. In his preface the author avers, with apparent earnestness, that he sets about his task devoid of rancor or prejudice, but with a due regard for the performance of a conscientious duty. He then sails in and says things, quoting copiously from and commenting freely upon the contents of the said book, his quotations, however, being carefully selected, wrenched from the contexts, and discussed as though standing alone and having little or no connection with antecedent or succeeding subject matter. You could play the deuce with almost any book in that way, even with the Holy Bible, to which loving reference is frequently made by the author of the Golden one, in endeavoring to show the contrast between the former and the Book of Mormon. The alleged bad grammar, illogical deduction and pointless assertion, which he seeks to make plain as characteristic of the latter volume, and treats with ridicule, or what to his mind doubtless does duty as such, are not only invidiously presented but in places disingenuously so. Referring to the incident of Lehi, for example, going in quest of game and obtaining which he returned to camp, the auriferous volume asks what he would naturally do, having obtained the object of his hunt, but return to camp. Sure enough! But where is the point? Would it have made the story more acceptable had the hunter returned empty-handed, or succeeding in his quest have gone off somewhere else with the game? The author seems to regard this incident as too trivial to be worthy of mention; but if so, what does it become by repetition? If the ancient scriptorian had such poor judgment in the matter of compiling sentences as to permit one to be borne into the record here and there that had no special importance *per se*, what excuse has the modern writer whose attack is ostensibly aimed at the whole fabric to which such sentences relate, for picking them out and devoting considerable space to them? There is much else in the same connection that he wholly misses. Why? Because they are not so easily disposed of? Whether so or not, he justifies one in believing that such is the case, and "one" at least does so believe. Of like tenor and effect are several more—I might as well say most, and in fact all, that were perused of the gentleman's slings and arrows; they incite to the antagonism which is created and are distinctly reacting.

Before proceeding further with this little review, let us give Rev. Lamb the benefit of some of his own language:

The first objection to the book [of Mormon] to be considered is this: *It has no trace of God's hand upon it.* No divine stamp. Everything is human, very human. * * * When he [God] paints a flower or tints the rainbow He does not *daub*. * * * Look at the discourses of our Lord, any one of them.

And then the inspired writer of the *Golden Bible* proceeds at length to draw a sharp contrast between the language of the Bible and that of the Book of Mormon, showing that the latter is insufferably verbose, reiterative, turgid and pointless, the other book, of course, being the opposite in these respects. He makes numerous citations from the former and then rewrites them in fewer words and, according to modern methods, in less faulty diction. Any of us could do that, and we don't have to confine ourselves to the Mormon book either; the Bible itself as well as any ancient or even mediæval, and some few of the modern standard productions, may be so treated. Let us try a sample or two, this taken without selection from the Bible:

12. And Jehosaphat waxed great exceedingly; and he built in Judah castles and cities of stone. 13. And he had much business in the cities of Judah; and the men of war, mighty men of valor, were in Jerusalem. 14. And these are the numbers of them, according to the house of their fathers: Of Judah, the captain of thousands; Adnah, the chief, and with him mighty men of valor, three hundred thousand. 15. And next to him was Jehohanan, the captain, and with him two hundred and fourscore thousand. 16. And next him was Amasiah, the son of Zichri, * * * and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valor. 17. And of Benjamin; Eliada, a mighty man of valor, and with him armed men with bow and shield, two hundred thousand. 18. And next him was Jehozabad and with him a hundred and fourscore thousand ready prepared for the war.—II Chronicles, 17.

Abridged to the Lambsonian standard, these might be stated thus: *

Jehosaphat became wealthy and built castles and storehouses, his traffic extending to Jewish cities. A great army was in Jerusalem, there

* The reader will please observe that in this there is no disposition to make light of or in any manner revise the scriptural text, only a desire to show the inadequacy and injustice of Rev. Lamb's methods.

being—Of Judean generals: Adnah, in command, with 300,000 brave men; Jehohanan, with 280,000; Amasiah, the son of Zichri, with 200,000 splendid troops. Of Benjamin, there was Eliada, a valorous leader, with 200,000, armed with bows and shields; and Jehozabad with 180,000, all ready for business.

Here is a selection taken at random from Shakespeare:

They say this town is full of cozenage;
 As nimble jugglers that deceive the eye;
 Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind;
 Soul-killing witches that deform the body;
 Disguised cheaters, prating mountebanks.
 And many such like liberties of sin:
 If it prove so I will be gone the sooner.
 I'll to the Centaur to seek this slave.
 I greatly fear my money is not safe.

Comedy of Errors, Act 1, Scene 2.

Why blank verse to detail so prosaic a circumstance? The modern reportorial method, with its incidental slang—which Rev. Lamb uses quite freely—applied to the quotation would simplify it thus:

It is reported this town is full of cheating. Thimble-riggers, hypnotists, even impossible witches, bunco-steerers, sure-thing men and others of like ilk, are said to haunt the place. So I'll take good advice and hike before my money is gone.

This "translation" may seem a little strained and far-fetched to the reader; but it is not a whit more so than are many of the "reductions" from the text of the Book of Mormon made by Mr. Lamb. There is not space enough at my disposal to give any of them—the briefest being somewhat lengthy—so, for once, will the reader kindly receive the unprejudiced judgment and carefully considered word of this writer for it?

As to the quotations from the "Golden" author, which had sequence been observed herein would have received consideration before the immediately preceding matter, there is a good deal that might be said and some little that will be. The first objection to the Book of Mormon is that it has not the trace of God's hand upon it, according to the "Golden" critic. The extreme arrogance of this, so apparent to even the casual observer, will become more striking the more it is considered, and here the "divine" becomes

a victim of his own favorite practice of comparison. The Book of Mormon puts forth the claim that those who really want to know regarding its divine authenticity may be gratified by other means than the solemn and unforced statements of sane and living witnesses as to the origin of the book; but Mr. Lamb, rushing in where angels would fear to, or at least do not, tread, announces without reserve that God's hand is not there! How does he know? Has the Deity ever shown him his hand? By what right does he assume so much familiarity with the Great Author as to be able to know where His hand is, regarding any mortal production, and where it is not? Mr. Lamb is estopped from saying that he was inspired or that it was revealed to him, because he especially repudiates divine inspiration and denies that there is such a thing as modern revelation from on high; so that the question put by the *New York World* to the Tammany leaders, "where did you get it?" is clearly applicable. The only refuge the gentleman can have is that he is convinced of it, that it is a fixed conviction derived from a thorough consideration of the subject in all its bearings, and in the light of educated human understanding. But the refuge so cheerfully and voluntarily herein extended, is by no means a strengthening, but works a complete abandonment, of his position; because, as will be observed, he makes an unqualified statement, an absolute assertion of correctness, and any modification thereof is so much in the direction of a retreat. It is a fact too apparent to permit of controversy that he knows nothing whatever about it—that the impress of the Almighty might or might not be upon every line of the Book of Mormon, and so far as actual knowledge is concerned Mr. Lamb would be as ignorant of the situation as a Senegambian. Now, of course, we are not always able to prove to a demonstration things that impress us so strongly as to amount to a conviction, and so long as we state the case that way we are on the safe side; but when we cut loose from all restraint and say without reservation that things are thus and so and not otherwise, we ought to be prepared with better evidence than Rev. Lamb possesses regarding his bald, blatant assertion in relation to the hand of the Almighty—no, not *better* evidence, but just evidence, for he has given none and manifestly has none to give.

[TO BE CONCLUDED IN NEXT NUMBER]

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