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Abstract: Series of articles dealing with archaeological, anthropological, geographical, societal, religious, and historical aspects of ancient America and their connections to the Book of Mormon, which is the key to understanding “old American” studies.

Old America.

BY G. M. O.

ANCIENT RUINS.

(Continued.)

THE peculiar characteristics of the ruins of Copan are the elaborately carved stone obelisks, varying from eleven to thirteen feet in height, and from three to four in width and in depth, in every case having on the principal face a human figure, male or female, sculptured in high relief, presenting its full front and having the upper part of the arm pressed close in to the body, and the lower part, or fore-arm, brought forward so as to allow of the hands being pressed against the breast. They are all clad in rich garments, some in the form of tunics, others more like pantaloons. The feet are clumsy and generally covered with a kind of sandal or buskin. The heads are adorned with helmets with carved work of the most fanciful description, the details of which can hardly be separated from the mass of intricate ornamental work which covers the monuments on all sides from top to bottom. The expression of the faces on the different obelisks varies, though the calm and placid predominates. The sculptured ornaments are graceful and pleasing in design, and the back and sides are covered with hieroglyphics. In front of one, the monument described by Mr. Stephens as differing from others in its vicinity, is an altar four feet high and six feet square, of one block of stone, resting on four globes cut out of the same material. The base reliefs on the sides represent sixteen human figures seated in oriental fashion, cross-legged. In the hand of each is a weapon, the character of which is difficult to define. The heads of all are covered with very peculiar head dresses, without plumes. On the western side are the two principal figures, sitting with their faces towards each other, as if engaged in discussion, while of the other fourteen figures seven are placed in the rear of each principal face, in the same direction as their respective leaders, of which they are evidently the retinues. The top of the altar is divided into thirty-six tablets of hieroglyphics, evidently recording the important transaction that the two parties have met to discuss. In regard to costume, no two of the head dresses are alike, and though the remarkable facial angle is preserved, there is likewise a variety of expression in the countenances.

Down the sides of the pyramids and covering the ground are innumerable remains of sculpture, some still remaining in position, others forming heaps of fragments, among which many blocks are remarkably well preserved. Half way up the sides of one of the pyramids are rows of death's heads of colossal proportions, but of such peculiar construction in the conformation as to represent the heads or skulls of monkeys, not of men. The supposition that they were so intended, is in a manner confirmed by the finding of the effigy of a colossal ape at the foot of the pyramid, bearing, it is said, a strong resemblance to the same species originally figured on the great obelisk from the ruins of Thebes, now in Paris. These animals were worshiped at Thebes, and it has been thought not unlikely that the same may have been the case among the inhabitants of Copan. Among the fragments are found several human heads, which have evidently been chiseled with a close adherence to nature, impressing the beholder with the

belief that they were portraits, the features and expression of each bearing a strong individual character. The whole of the sides and walls of the pyramids and terraces have evidently been decorated with similar sculptures, which were fixed by stone tenons, which in many cases still adhere to them, and which were driven into the wall. Traces of color are still visible, indicating that these sculptures, like those of the old world, had been painted. In the outer wall of the small court within the temple a subterranean passage leading to the river wall, and below this a sepulchral vault, were examined several years ago by Colonel Galindo, who explored the ruins by order of the Mexican government. On each side of the vault, which is six feet high, ten feet long and five and a half wide, are small niches, which contained, at the time of opening, earthenware vessels of different descriptions filled with human bones packed in lime. On the floor of the vault, which was paved with stones and coated with lime, were strewn various articles, such as stone knives, marine shells and a small death's head cut in green stone and described as of exquisite workmanship.

At some distance from the temple in a level area enclosed by walls stands a group of eight obelisks, or idols, similar in size and position to those described, but each having a distinct individuality. They are placed at distances of from fifty to two hundred feet from each other, and in front of each is an altar. The chief object of the sculptor has evidently been to inspire awe and terror, and to produce the desired effect he has resorted to exaggeration of feature, some of the countenances being ludicrously hideous, some purely terrific and only one or two pleasing in expression. Some of them are covered on all sides with hieroglyphics, and the workmanship is considered equal to the finest Egyptian sculpture. At the foot of one of the statues lies a colossal sculptured head of an alligator, half buried in the earth. In the eyes of antiquarians these idols have always been most interesting, as there is a hope that some day a key may be found to the hieroglyphics, and the mysteries of Copan unraveled.

Palacios, who described Copan nearly three hundred years ago, saw much more than Mr. Stephens. He tells of the "ruins of superb edifices built of hewn stone, which manifestly belonged to a large city." In connection with the great wall he mentions a colossal eagle, carved in stone, which bore on its breast a square shield covered with hieroglyphics. He also mentions a "stone giant," and a "stone cross," one of the arms of which was broken. He saw a plaza, or square, circular in form, surrounded by ranges of stone steps, or seats, similar to the Coliseum at Rome. It was "paved with beautiful stones, all square and well worked; six great statues stood in the enclosure, and in the centre was a great stone basin." Huarros, in his history of Guatemala, states that the "circus of Copan," as he calls this "plaza" described by Palacios, was still perfect and entire in the year 1700. He mentions gateways, which led into the enclosure.

Copan was first discovered and described in 1576; it was then as strange and mysterious to the natives living near it as it is to-day; native tradition had forgotten its history, even its existence. The Spaniards under Cortez assaulted and captured a native town not far (some twenty miles) from the forest-covered ruins, but heard nothing of them. The captured town afterwards gave its name to this nameless city. Forty years afterwards Palacios discovered the ruins, and tried "in all possible ways" to get from the natives some account of the ruined city, but they could tell him nothing about it, so long had its existence then been lost to the memory of man. Mr.

Stephens has very singularly fallen into the mistake of confounding this old ruined city with the town captured by the Spaniards. The ruins, like others in the country, were discovered accidentally, and to approach them it was necessary to cut paths through the dense tropical undergrowth.

Within a few miles of Copan, on the banks of the river Montagua, are the ruins called Quirigua. These ruins have a close resemblance to Copan, and it is manifest that a great city once stood here. Antiquarians are of the opinion that these ruins are much older than Copan, for they have to a great extent become little more than heaps of rubbish. Mr. Stephens confines his description chiefly to a pyramidal structure with flights of steps and monoliths larger and higher than those at Copan, but otherwise similar. He states, however, that they are hardly so rich in design. One of the obelisks here is twenty feet high, with the figures of a man on the front, and on the back a woman; the sides are covered with hieroglyphics similar in appearance to those at Copan.

(To be Continued.)

Correspondence.

AMERICAN FORK, UTAH Co.
June, 1875.

Editor *Juvenile Instructor*:

DEAR BROTHER.—Thinking your young friends (this includes all good Saints) would like to read about the County Jubilee which occurred here on the 1st of June, I take pleasure in writing a few lines for your beautiful paper.

Much labor had been performed for days previous, preparing for the event, the various committees working with zest, and all called upon responding with a will, to make ready for the large assembly expected.

The morning dawned, and the heavens threatened to blight the hopes of thousands of hearts that were looking forward with expectancy to this great day; but the prayers of all prevailed, the cold snow storm abated, and the sun peered from the clouds and smiled upon us in regal splendor.

Between the hours of nine and ten A. M. vehicles of all kinds came rolling into town filled with beaming countenances from the settlements adjoining, eager to participate in the day's exercises. At half past ten the trains from south and north had arrived, bringing their live freight from the various settlements: Goshen, Santaquin, Payson, Salem, Spanish Fork, Springville, Provo, Pleasant Grove, Alpine, Lehi, Cedar Fort and Fairfield. All furnished their quota of Sabbath School children and friends. The system and order which prevailed enabled all to find the seats appropriated to the various schools, and the large bowery, filled with its sea of heads, reminded one of a huge banyan tree. Suitable mottoes were tastefully arranged about the stand, which was filled with distinguished guests, among whom were His Excellency Gov. Axtell, Hon. Geo. Q. Cannon, Bps. A. O. Smoot, L. E. Harrington, D. Evans, W. Bringhurst and T. J. McCullough, Supts. Geo. Goddard, D. Johns, S. S. Jones, W. Paxman, Sec. J. B. Maiben, H. Maiben and many others whose hearts are in the Sabbath School work.

To give a detailed account of the exercises, would require more space than you would be willing to grant; and to cull out where all was so excellent would be hardly honorable, suffice it to say, the singing of the children was sublime and evinced great training by the musical directors. The recitations elicited merited applause and commendation, the deportment of the scholars was excellent, and the remarks of the speakers replete with wisdom and good counsel and prompted by the Spirit of God.

The assembly was addressed by the following speakers: Gov. Axtell, Hon. Geo. Q. Cannon, Bishops Smoot and Bringhurst,

Supt. D. Johns, Orator of the day. Supts. Geo. Goddard, S. S. Jones, Wm. Paxman and others; and in the language of Supt. Cannon, "A man must be inhuman if his emotions were not aroused by what was transpiring this day."

The exercises of the day were closed by singing the "World's Jubilee" in full chorus, and the assembly dismissed by prayer by the chaplain. Then the bowery which had been so full of life, was soon empty, the mass speeding on their way home, recording it a day to be remembered.

Respectfully yours,
J. B. FORBES.

SUNDAY LESSONS. FOR LITTLE LEARNERS.

ON THE HISTORY OF JOSEPH SMITH, THE PROPHET.—LESSON XIII.

Q.—Who instructed Moroni to put the plates in a stone box and bury them in the earth?

A.—God.

Q.—Who sent him as a messenger from heaven to tell Joseph Smith all about them?

A.—God.

Q.—What were they hid in the earth for?

A.—To prevent them from being destroyed by the wicked.

Q.—When did Joseph Smith meet the angel Moroni again?

A.—On the 22nd of September, 1824.

Q.—At what place?

A.—At the hill Cumorah, where the plates were buried.

Q.—How often did they meet afterwards?

A.—Once a year, for three years on the same day and month.

Q.—When did Moroni give Joseph Smith the plates?

A.—On the morning of the 22nd of September, 1827.

Q.—How old was Joseph when he received the plates?

A.—Between twenty-one and twenty-two years.

Q.—What instructions did the angel give to Joseph, when he gave him the plates?

A.—He told him to take good care of them.

Q.—Why did the angel warn him to take such care of them?

A.—Because he knew that many would try to take them from him.

Q.—Did the angel give him anything else besides the plates?

A.—Yes, the urim and thummim and the breastplate.

Q.—When it became known that Joseph had these, what effect did it have?

A.—Many people tried to get them from him.

THINK not of *doing as you like*: the expression characterizes the headstrong, and the unjust. DO AS YOU OUGHT TO DO. This is a golden precept. Pythagoras has not a richer.

WE rarely regret having spoken too little, but often having said too much.

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