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The Book of Mormon Land - IV. Geography of the Country

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Abstract: A series of articles containing commentary on important Book of Mormon issues, such as the language of Nephi, Reformed Egyptian, the journey from Jerusalem to the promised land, Lehi's landing on the coast of Chile, and the possible route of Nephi's flight from his brothers. The geographies of Chile, Columbia, and other South American locations are examined in light of the Book of Mormon.

this production of nature, or for its resemblance to the master-pieces of art, though this had no share in its construction. It is therefore not at all surprising that tradition should have made it the abode of a hero.

"The upright columns which compose the frontispiece, are of the most perfect regularity. Their height, to the beginning of the curvature, is forty-five feet.

"The arch is composed of two unequal segments of a circle, which form a sort of natural pediment.

"The mass which crowns, or rather which forms the roof, is twenty feet thick in the lowest part. It consists of small prisms, more or less regular, inclining in all directions, closely united and cemented underneath, and in the joints, with a yellowish white calcareous matter, and some zeolitic infiltrations, which give this fine ceiling the appearance of mosaic work.

"The sea reaches to the very extremity of the cave. It is fifteen feet deep at the mouth; and its waves, incessantly agitated, beat with great noise against the bottom and walls of the cavern, and everywhere break into foam. The light also penetrates through its whole length, diminishing gradually inwards, and exhibiting the most wonderful varieties of color.

"The right side of the entrance presents, on its exterior part, a vast amphitheatre, formed of different ranges of large truncated prisms, the tops of which may be easily walked on. Several of these prisms are jointed, that is, concave on the one side, and convex on the other; and some of them are divided by simple transverse intersections.

"These prisms, consisting of a very durable and pure black basalt, are from one to three feet in diameter. Their forms are triangular, tetrapedral, pentagonal, and hexagonal; and some of them have seven or eight sides. I saw several large prisms, on the truncatures of which are distinctly traced the outlines of a number of smaller prisms; that is, these prisms are formed of a basalt, which has a tendency to subdivide itself likewise into prisms. I had before observed the same phenomenon in the basaltic prisms of Vivarais.

"The cave can be entered only by proceeding along the platform on the right side, which I have mentioned above. But the way grows very narrow and difficult as it advances; for this sort of interior gallery, raised about fifteen feet above the level of the sea, is formed entirely of truncated perpendicular prisms of a greater or less height, between which considerable address is necessary to choose one's steps, the passages being so straight and so slippery, owing to the droppings from the roof, that I took the very prudent resolution, suggested by our two guides, to proceed barefooted, and take advantage of their assistance, especially in a particular place, where I had room only to plant one foot, whilst I clung with my right hand to a large prism to support myself, and held the hand of one of the guides by the other. This difficult operation took place at the darkest part of the cave; and one half of the body was at the time suspended over an abyss, where the sea dashed itself into a cloud of foam.

"I was desirous of penetrating to the farthest extremity, and I accomplished my purpose, though not without considerable difficulty and danger. I more than once found my attention distracted from the observations which I was happy to have an opportunity of making, to the thought of how I should get back again.

"As I drew near to the bottom of the cave, the bold balcony, on which I walked, expanded into a large sloping space, composed of thousands of broken vertical columns. The bottom was bounded by a compact range of pillars of an unequal height, and resembling the front of an organ."

PARENTS can never be too careful not to chastise a child because their own tempers have been roused. There is such a thing as swift and righteous anger which visits a misdeed on the instant, but the parents must not give expression and vent to their tempers in punishment. If they do, the effect is all for evil. Let the incorrigibly naughty child wait till you are cool and understand the punishment is for his good at the expense of your pain.

TIRED WORKERS.

YOU have no idea, boys and girls, how much of the best work of the world is done by those already well-nigh worn out with labor before they begin it. The neatly-made clothes you wear, the clean and tidy room that welcomes you home from school, the nice stories you read—are many of them the product of weary hands and heads.

Almost anyone can work when they feel fresh and rested, but it requires determination and force of will, moved by love or sense of duty, to persevere in endeavor when powers of mind and body beg for repose.

Now, we are not going to champion what is called "the cramming process," or the disastrous system of overtaxing the mental or physical capabilities. Yet neither do we believe in encouraging a weak shrinking from considerable tasks. Fatigue in moderation will not hurt anyone, in presentable health, young or old. On the contrary, it is only exercise to the point of fatigue that will successfully develop the energies. The people of most account in the world are those who can work when they are tired; they are those that parents, employers and customers can depend on to keep their promises and be faithful to their duties.

The ability to attain to this high standard of usefulness is, of necessity, partly physical. The strongest will and the most conscientious soul cannot give strength to the body when it is once seriously debilitated. So if you want that power of endurance which goes so far to make reliable men and women, you must not ruin your constitution by rich, unhealthy food, by late hours, by indulging in indolence or excesses of any sort. All these things tend to enervate, to take the power out of nerve and muscle, besides weakening the moral sense. Be self-denying and temperate, and you will leave far behind you, in the race of life, the self-indulgent and intemperate.

THE BOOK OF MORMON LAND.

IV.—Geography of the Country.

BY HAGOTH.

BEFORE proceeding further with the subject it might be well to examine the geography of the country under consideration.

About the 90° south latitude the great Andean range separates into two chains, one of which runs northward parallel to the coast, until it reaches the isthmus. The other runs north-east and north enclosing the valley or basin of the Desaguadero, and then continues on northward about parallel to the coast range until it reaches the 2° north latitude, where both ranges unite in the mountain knot of Pasto. Just north of which they separate into three ranges known as the eastern, western and central Cordilleras of Colombia.

The two ranges constitute a vast terrestrial billow bristling with volcanoes and snowy peaks and supporting a minor network of hills and mountains, whose vast summits "often spread out in broad undulating plains or pumas varying from fourteen to eighteen thousand feet above the sea, frigid, barren, desolate, and where life is only represented by the hardy vicuña and the condor. This inhospitable region is the great Despoblado or unpeopled region of Peru." In some parts the two ranges are from one to two hundred miles apart enclosing numerous valleys, which, though they lie wholly

within the tropics, have almost every variety of climate. Some of them, like the valley of the Desaguadero, owing to their high altitude, are cold and barren, where vegetation is scrubby and scant, and where the pinched and shivering inhabitants can scarcely eke out a livelihood.

The valley or basin of the Desaguadero is a vast region similar to our Salt Lake basin, comprising a large number of valleys divided by mountain ridges, and having a lake and river system of its own. Lake Titicaca is situated at the northern and Lake Aullagas at the southern end of this basin. The former is some larger than our Salt Lake, and the latter about the size of Utah Lake. A river connects them, emptying into the latter.

It was within this region, on the shores of Lake Titicaca, that the Incas claim their civilization originated.

It is certainly a very unfavorable region to be the cradle of a race, being for the most part cold and barren, deluged by rain in the summer season, and dry and cold in winter. Wheat will not ripen only under very favorable circumstances. Corn is dwarfed and small, a variety of bitter potato is about the only vegetable grown.

North of this region many of the valleys are mild and healthful and the temperature does not vary ten degrees throughout the year. Here the grain and fruits of the temperate zones abound.

Others again enjoy a climate of perpetual spring where "smiling nature in all her gorgeous hues arrayed" seems to have exerted herself to form a striking contrast with the cold and barren plateaux and snow peaks within her view. There stately palms and tropical plants and fruits in almost endless varieties grow profusely. There need be no famine, no want there, for vegetation of all kinds grows continually. Yet travelers find it difficult sometimes to procure bread for themselves or hay for their animals, so indolent are the present inhabitants.

Communication between the various valleys is very difficult, owing to the high rocky mountains and cold barren pumas which separate them; there they are encircled by the mighty gorges of rivers which are impassable, except by frail suspension bridges.

Such was the land of the early Nephites, and a very favorable place it was for the development of their race, as we shall see as we proceed.

At the discovery of America, the region from Quito to south of Lake Titicaca was embraced in the government of the Incas, which, originating on the shores of the lake, had gradually spread into the surrounding valleys. One tribe after another came under their influence until all the tribes of the coast and table-land acknowledged the Inca power. These were not barbarians for they were well advanced in some of the arts and sciences. They were an agricultural people, probably as well advanced in the arts of husbandry as we are ourselves. They understood the working of metals, had furnaces and workshops. In the working of gold they were particularly expert, few of our artificers could excel them in this art. They were good masons, as their monuments still attest.

Their government was well adapted to their wants, much better than exists in the country to-day. Never before was a nation so well organized, so completely in the hands of its rulers as this was. Never before did a nation care for its subjects as this. Prescott says: "No man could become rich, no man could become poor, no spendthrift could waste his substance in riotous luxury. No adventurous schemer could impoverish

his family by the spirit of speculation. The law was constantly directed to enforce a steady industry and a sober management of his affairs. No mendicant was tolerated in Peru. When a man was reduced by poverty or misfortune the arm of the law was stretched out to minister relief; not the stinted relief of private charity, nor that which is doled out, drop by drop, as it were from the frozen reservoirs of 'the parish,' but in generous measure, bringing no humiliation to the object of it, and placing him on a level with the rest of his countrymen. No man could be rich, no man could be poor in all Peru, but all might enjoy, and did enjoy a competence."

How like our proposed United Order their system seems?

Is it not probable that they received their knowledge of this system of unity, from their fathers, who understood it and lived it for three hundred years after the coming of our Savior? We think so.

We have mentioned Quito as a part of the Inca empire. That kingdom had existed as an independent state for generations, but had just been conquered by the Incas before the arrival of the Spanish. It was about equal to the Incas in civilization.

The region now known as Colombia was inhabited at the conquest by a number of tribes of wild Indians, one or two tribes of whom had made some advancement in the arts of civilization, probably about the same as the five nations of New York. All the other Indians of South America were wild, living in constant warfare with each other and depending upon fishing and hunting for a livelihood.

A REPORTER'S REVENGE.

NOTICE had been taken of the Duke of Cambridge's visit to Liverpool, but one remarkable episode of that visit is now nearly forgotten. A newspaper man who was then in Liverpool gave a graphic description of it the other night. The Duke of Cambridge, Mr. Cardwell, and several other distinguished men were to dine with the Mayor at the Town Hall. Their speeches were expected to be of European importance, and great interest attached to the occasion. Owing to the great attendance the Mayor could find room for only one reporter. There was much protest on the part of the press, but it was of no avail. An expert reporter named Murphy was selected for the work, and arrangements were made to supply all England with the report which he was to dictate. But Mr. Murphy was treated with the utmost discourtesy by the Town Hall officials. He was placed apart from the guests in an orchestra occupied by the fiddlers.

He took his revenge when he returned to the office where a dozen reporters were awaiting him, he smiled benignantly upon them and told them to go home. "Go home! what do you mean? Have you not got the report?" "I have taken down every syllable," said the redoubtable Murphy, "here are my notes," slapping his pocketbook, "and there they remain. I have been grossly insulted, and not a line of the speeches shall ever see print." He was as good as his word, and so far as England and the world were concerned, the great men at the Town Hall might as well have uttered their words of wisdom, congratulation, and warning in a thunderstorm from the top of Snowdon.

To live long, is necessary to live slowly.