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## The Book of Mormon as a Literary Product

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**Abstract:** The Book of Mormon is a standard work of American literature and its essentials are in harmony with the Bible.

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# EDITORIAL

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*Motto—Charity Never Faileth*

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## The Book of Mormon as a Best Seller

Thirty years ago the American public was astonished by the statement that a popular volume of fiction had sold at the rate of a quarter of million copies in three months. That sort of thing was new in America at that time. It has occurred somewhat frequently since. The last few years has probably witnessed the sale of a quarter of million copies of the Book of Mormon. The book is not yet in the class of the best sellers, but it is rapidly moving toward such a place. It does not seem to us extravagant in any way to suggest that during the next hundred years the Book of Mormon will become one of the best sellers among American books; indeed, it is not impossible that it may become the best seller.

## The Book of Mormon as a Literary Product

It is difficult to call to mind a book that has been more frequently scoffed at than has the Book of Mormon by its would-be critics. Yet the standard history of American literature, the *Cambridge History*, has devoted considerable space to the book under the caption, "New Bibles". While the author of the chapter insists that the advent of the book was quite unnecessary, quoting "Mormon" authorities to the effect that it agrees in all essentials with the Bible, therefore, he argues, there is no excuse for its

existence; yet, so potent has the book become in the ninety-three years since its first publication, in 1830, that men of letters writing a history of the literature of the nation have been forced to include it, which means that University students, all over the land, will learn of the book as a literary product.

## The Scholar and the Book of Mormon

The 21st of September of this year marks the centenary of the appearance of the Angel Moroni to the Prophet Joseph Smith; a visit which eventually resulted in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. The first edition of the Book of Mormon was published in 1830. Since that time many persons have attempted to discredit the story of the Prophet Joseph concerning the origin of the Book. These critics have been very numerous in college circles. Whether the critic has appeared within the confines of the college, among those who are classed as learned or among those classed as the unlearned, they are all in the same predicament. They deny the story of the origin of the book as set forth by Joseph Smith and the witnesses; yet they fail utterly to establish any other origin.

With the attitude of many scholars in mind, we recall the admonition of an elderly gentleman who said to some people who were very greatly disturbed over what their opponents were saying about them, "Don't fear an opponent who changes front every day; it may be tremendously irritating, but it is an acknowledgment of the weakness of his position." This remark strikes home with singular force as it applies to the critics of the Book of Mormon.

Within the decade an incredibly large number of theses have been written by graduate students in American Universities, on the Book of Mormon, most of them having as their objects, first, the refutation of the story as told by Joseph Smith and the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, while their second aim has been to establish the origin of the book. Many and most ingenious have been the theories presented. The confusion found in the ranks of the skeptical must give comfort to those who know that the Book of Mormon is of divine origin.

This winter a story came to us from the University of California which is typical of attempts made by students in other colleges to explain the origin of the book. A student presented a thesis which, as usual, denied the story of the origin as maintained by the Latter-day Saints, and which also admitted that the idea that the book had any connection with the Solomon Spaulding Manuscripts had been exploded. The writer then proceeded to give Sidney Rigdon credit for the authorship of