

ernment; and a king of their own to rule over them; and in addition to this powerful, national foe, the Nephites were harrassed by a numerous band of robbers and murderers, who infested the country, and joined with the Lamanites in pillaging and murdering their Nephite brethren. These freebooters were led by a most daring and desperate character, named Gadianton. And one of the sacred historians declares that, "This Gadianton did prove the overthrow, yea, almost the entire destruction of the people of Nephi." Hel. ii: 13.

War and devastation went on for many years between the rival factions, with intervening seasons of cessations and peace. In the years 360-1 A. D., the Lamanites came against the Nephites and were defeated by the latter. These victories made them vain-glorious and self-conceited, and in the flush of fancied superiority they bound themselves by solemn oaths to revenge their wrongs, and cut their enemies off from the face of the earth. In consequence of this boastful and ungrateful attitude, the voice of the Lord proclaimed to Mormon:

"Because this people repent not, after I have delivered them, behold, they shall be cut off from the face of the earth." Mor. iii: 7, and 15.

About two years after this the Nephites went up against the Lamanites, but met with defeat and severe loss. From this time ensued a series of most terrible conflicts; the whole land was filled with rapine, bloodshed and calamity. Multitudes were slain on both sides, and the combatants were intoxicated with savage ferocity, and in their wild frenzy they rioted in mutual atrocities—unparalleled in the annals of civilized warfare. Mormon says:

"And it is impossible for the tongue to describe, or for man to write a perfect description of the horrible scene of blood and carnage, which was among the people; both of the Nephites and of the Lamanites, and every heart was hardened, so that they delighted in the shedding of blood continually." Mor. iv: 11.

Women and children were offered in sacrifice to their idol gods. Verses 14 and 21.

In the second epistle of Mormon to his son Moroni, the prophet gives a most graphic and touching picture of the woeful scenes in which he himself took an active though unavailing part. The people had lost their love one towards another; they thirsted after blood and revenge continually; they fed women upon the

flesh of their slain husbands, and children upon the flesh of their fathers.

"For behold, many of the daughters of the Lamanites have they taken prisoners; and after depriving them of that which was most dear and precious above all things, which is chastity and virtue; and after they had done this thing, they did murder them in a most cruel manner, torturing their bodies even unto death; and after they have done this, they devour their flesh like unto wild beasts, because of the hardness of their hearts; and they do it for a token of bravery." Moroni ix: 9, 10.

About the year 384, the distressed leader of the Nephites wrote to the king of the Lamanites, requesting permission to collect together the scattered remnants of his people and locate them in the land of Cumorah; and there to give the Lamanites battle; which request was granted. Mormon vi: 1 and 3. There was a hill called Cumorah in that locality, and the vicinity of this hill was the fatal gathering place of the people of Nephi.

As stated in a previous article, this section of country is in the present State of New York, and the hill Cumorah is situated in Ontario County of that State. It was upon this very soil that, nearly ten centuries before, the last and fiercest battles of the Jaredites were fought, and that race became extinct with the fatal duel between Shiz and Coriantumr.

The situation of the Nephites was now painful and distressing in the extreme. The battered and disheartened remnants of the army; the delicate women and the innocent children had gathered for the final struggle—had been assembled to the cruel and horrible slaughter. The devoted assemblage saw the enemy in all the dread panoply of war approaching, and it would seem that they were utterly helpless before him. The Lamanites fell upon them with sword and axe and all manner of murderous weapons, and hewed them down as grass is cut with scythes. Twenty-two captains, having each ten thousand men under command, were slain with their entire companies. The women and children suffered a like cruel fate. Mor. vi: 4-20 Twenty-four only, escaped with their lives from slaughter; but this was only to increase their sufferings, and postpone their fate; as we learn that "After the great and tremendous battle at Cumorah, the Nephites who had escaped into the country southward, were hunted by the Lamanites until they were all de-

stroyed." Mor. viii: 2. This was written by Moroni, who adds:

"And my father also was killed by them, and I, even remain alone to write the sad tale of the destruction of my people. But behold, they are gone, and I fulfill the commandment of my father. And whether they will slay me, I know not." Verse 3.

The picture here presented of the fearfully demoralized condition of the only race which remained upon the American continent, at the close of the fourth century after Christ, goes far to clear up the mystery of the fallen and barbarous condition in which the aboriginal races were found. Shut off from all contact and communication with the civilized world, what else could be expected—what else does experience teach—than that the Lamanites would not only not reform their lives, and recover their high state of national dignity, but that they would retrograde and sink lower and lower until they reached their present degraded condition.

This was the tendency of the race when Moroni, their last historian, closed the record, just previous to his inhumation of the plates. This is his last historical notice four hundred years after Christ:

"Behold, the Lamanites have hunted my people, the Nephites, down from city to city, and from place to place, even until they are no more; and great has been their fall; yea, great and marvelous is the destruction of my people, the Nephites. And behold, it is the hand of the Lord which hath done it. And behold also, the Lamanites are at war one with another; and the whole face of this land is one continual round of murder and bloodshed; and no one knoweth the end of the war. And now behold, I say no more concerning them, for there are none, save it be the Lamanites and robbers, that do exist upon the face of the land." Mor. viii: 7-9.

The decadence, and almost the total extinction of the people of Nephi were a befitting sequel to a train of successive wars and wholesale tragedies extending through many centuries. We have already adduced, from authentic and respectable sources, evidences of stupendous military operations, upon a wide area of country in the new world. These writers and explorers attest the existence of military works and the wrecks of the battle field in endless variety and extent.

The historical part of the Book of Mormon is principally taken up with the vicissitudes of governments and reigning monarchs; recitals of the movements of armies; the sickening details of sanguinary