

Correspondence.

Missionary Labors—Baptisms, etc.

VARNELL STATION, Ga.,
Jan. 2d, 1879.

Editors Deseret News:

Since my communication to you of October 28th, 1878, I have been laboring alone. Owing to the weather, which has been very disagreeable, I have not held as many meetings as I would have liked. Those that were held were only attended by those who are interested in the salvation of their own souls. It seems to me that I can see the people daily becoming more careless, more indifferent to the things of God. Their minds are covered as with a cloud of darkness, and the most careless do not want it removed. Others when the veil is lifted from before their eyes exclaim, "I was not aware that the people were so bad. Rather than to have my daughter marry in this land I would see her buried! Rather than to rear my children among so much vice and wickedness I would willingly bury them."

Christmas eve a young man named Collins who lived in Tenn., and whom I had let read Spencer's Letters, got drunk, and being of a quarrelsome disposition, began a row with his step-father-in-law in the latter's house. Young Collins being ordered to leave drew his pistol and began firing, causing the owner to run, followed by the inebriate. Picking up an ax the pursued turned and dealt Collins a blow, the ax entering his left side just below the armpit passing through his ribs into his lungs. He died 36 hours after.

The petition of the "Anti's" was copied by the papers, but have not heard of any of the preachers taking it up. The moral status in this land would hardly admit of a very vehement tirade against "the down-trodden women of Utah."

A short time since an ex-minister of the Baptist Church gave out an appointment for the purpose of "showing the Mormons up." He came in a wagon. In his company was his legal wife and a woman that he has kept as a wife for years. Like the man who laughed so heartily to think what fun it would be to throw the bull over the fence by the horns, but after trying found himself over the fence covered with dirt, exclaimed, "Faith, and it's a good thing I had me laugh first," so with the denouncer; he is now silent.

In my labors I go quietly along visiting and making new friends. Having a good supply of Hymn Books, I loaned these out. The people being delighted with the words, some of the young folks had a desire to sing them, and that they might learn the tunes as well as the songs of Zion, I appointed two nights in a week for singing—with pleasing results.

Among those most interested in the gospel was an old lady by the name of Fullbright. She is nearly 80 years of age. She read the Book of Mormon through in one week. Yesterday, although the weather was bad, I baptized the above-named lady, her daughter, aged over 50, and her grand-daughter, who is the mother of eight children, making a representation of three generations. After confirming them, I felt impressed to organize them, with the three others recently baptized, into a branch, setting apart Bro. Henry Huffaker, whom I ordained to preside.

The branch will be known as the Varnell branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I am confident that more will soon be added.

I can say that I am proud of my calling, considering it to be an honor and privilege of being an ambassador of truth. I trust that the faith of the Saints is exercised in behalf of the Elders.

Yours in the gospel,

JOS. STANDING.

P. S.—While writing the above Bro. Charles W. Hardy came in on me, looking well and hearty. We will travel together. J. S.

More About the "Golden Plate."

BRIGHAM CITY,
January 7th, 1879.

Editors Deseret News:

Brethren.—As mention has been made of the fac simile of a golden plate presented to the Museum in your city, which was found, as before stated, by Mr. Benjamin Styles, of Cincinnati, O., about the year

1850, what little information I can give upon the subject, I am willing to impart, in hopes that the plate may yet be obtained, and become a relic among the archives of the Church, as corroborative evidence of the truth of the "Book of Mormon."

I coincide with the statement of Bro. Coombs in regard to it, with a little additional information concerning the plate, and the probable whereabouts of the owner for some years after his removal from Salt Lake City.

I became acquainted with Benjamin Styles, in Cincinnati, in 1848. He was a member of the branch of the Church in that city, over which I then presided, and I remember the finding of the plate about two years afterward. I had it in my possession six or eight months, and I had ample opportunity to examine it, by the aid of a microscope, and showing it to others, in hopes of finding some one who could decipher the characters, which were so minute that they could not all be seen by the naked eye, and I could always find something on it which I had not seen before. I took it from the frame and tried to file it, but could get no file to make an impression upon it; and, what was still more strange to me, the ground work was made up of fine lines running diagonally across either way, forming a network of little diamonds so very fine it was with difficulty they could be discerned distinctly by the naked eye, and over this were engraved the minute hieroglyphics before mentioned.

On a visit to New York I still further pursued my investigation of it, and had it examined by a learned Jew or Rabbi who professed to be versed in Egyptian characters. He deciphered some of it, and declared it to be the history of a king or emperor who had reigned on this continent many centuries ago, giving his name which I have now forgotten. He declared also the characters were only part Egyptian, and on this account he was not able fully to decipher them. I also showed it to a jeweler, who pronounced it to be gold, but marveled greatly at its hardness, and the exceeding fineness of its engravings, for he could not make an impression upon it.

I thought at that time, with what it might have been worn on a military belt of some warrior or king of that period.

It was found about 25 or 30 feet below the surface, excavating on a side hill in the rear of Mr. Styles' dwelling. So much for the history of the plate. I frequently solicited him to place it in the custody of the Church, but of no avail.

To be brief, Benjamin Styles resided in Salt Lake City in '61 and '62, but like too many others, went to California to better his circumstances, and afterward to Nevada, where I am informed he died, some few years ago, how long since, I cannot now state, but I can get further information if necessary.

I often asked him to present it to President Young, while in Salt Lake City. He declined, because he thought he should have his price for it. I may say further, that I had a plaster of Paris cast made from it, which was broken and destroyed or lost; but it failed to give more than a faint idea of the exceeding fineness of the work upon it. If this description, here given, will be of any service to the public who take an interest in this great work, you are at liberty to publish, in hopes that still further light may be elicited.

Yours respectfully,
WM. H. MILES.PEOA, Summit Co., U.T.,
January 9, 1879.

Editors Deseret News:

Dear Sirs.—During the years 1855-56 I was a resident of Cincinnati, Ohio, and knew personally Mr. Ben. Styles. I frequently saw in his possession a beautifully engraved gold robe-pin plate and often was permitted to handle it. Those who profess a fac simile have a true copy of what it was like. The thin plate was thickly covered with hieroglyphics.

Mr. B. Styles had quite a number of fac styles printed from the gold plate, at a printing office in Cincinnati. He was frequently offered a large sum of money for the gold plate but refused. He told me why he refused to part with the plates—he had had a dream—and a man in his dream told him while he was the posses-

sor of the plates he, Styles, would be preserved from sudden death or accidents. Mr. Styles also told me he found it while he was digging a well or cistern, quite a few feet below the surface in the city of Cincinnati, Ohio.

Mr. B. Styles I saw in Salt Lake City in the year 1862, the last I heard of him he was an assistant engineer on a Pacific Ocean steamer. Your's truly,

EDMUND WALKER,
Peca, Summit County, Utah.

Our Mail Service.

GUNNISON, Jan. 10, 1879.

Editors Deseret News:

Our mail service from Nephi, through Sanpete and Sevier, as far south as Kanab, is everywhere found fault with, and not without reason.

It is said that the contractor put his bid down so cheap, being unacquainted, probably, with the amount of mail matter to be carried through daily, that inability really is the cause of the delinquencies.

The practice is:

1. As a general thing, at best, we have five mails a week instead of six, from the north.

2. As the mails are too formidable to be carried on ponies, every day, mail matters are accumulated somewhere; and when a wagon load is accumulated, we get it.

Thus, for two weeks, we got both our Semi-Weekly DESERET NEWS on the Thursday. One week previous to that we had none at all. And to-day, Thursday, January 9th, we have still had no DESERET NEWS later than December 31st. And this when the U. S. R. R. terminus is only 56 miles off. M.

Editors Deseret News:

Many peculiar views and ideas have been advanced by various persons, in their efforts to render to the world an explanation of the mysterious problem called Mormonism, but how far they have been successful is shown by the sentiments existing to-day among all classes of people, here and elsewhere, concerning this all important matter.

It is a fact, so often repeated, that there is something more in this problem than human wisdom can devise, and that no one can comprehend the plan of salvation, as it has been revealed from heaven in these latter days, without the aid of the Spirit of God, the light of which can only find its way to a heart humbled by love of truth and righteousness.

The Latter-day Saints have only wished to be left alone in peace to live their religion unmolested, a privilege guaranteed to every race and color by the constitution of the United States, and, moreover, to protect every person in the enjoyment of those rights and immunities that have made this land famous all over the world, and have caused millions of people to flock to these shores from tyranny and oppression that destroyed their love of home and fatherland. And still the Saints were driven from hearth and home, in defiance of law and justice, by a people proud of their freedom and liberal institutions, and thus forced to abandon their lawful possessions, the Saints were obliged to fly from the very confines of Christianity and civilization, and to hunt for a home in the desolate and uninhabitable valleys among the Rocky Mountains, and in this pilgrimage enduring sufferings and misery unparalleled in history. No sooner had they, by the blessings of heaven, made these valleys inhabitable and prepared homes for thousands of poor people, coming from all parts of the world, than they were again invaded by adventurers clamoring for prerogatives to which they had no reasonable claim whatever. Any impartial observer can see readily who commenced or laid the foundation to all the strife and discord that have disgraced the otherwise peaceful home of the Saints, who have had to stand the blame for and have been accused of every atrocious act committed, most generally by villains and outlaws, having escaped the arm of justice, and taking advantage of the perverted opinions concerning this people, by saddling their crimes upon an innocent community, and, perhaps at the same time enjoying their hospitality and protection. Such individuals have been willing tools in the hands of the devil to destroy peace and tranquility

among the people of God, and thus destroying what had cost years of toil for the servants of God to build up. Among other charges against the Saints is that of ignorance, but at what time did they lose any knowledge by embracing Mormonism? On the contrary there are thousands of men and women in this Territory to-day that can show more evidence, of practical knowledge than any other community placed under similar circumstances; and with all the liberal education that any country can afford, they could not have accomplished what they have if not inspired by a more powerful sentiment than could be claimed from human aid. The gospel has called forth latent energies in thousands and inspired them with light and intelligence that otherwise would have slumbered unknown and thus brought them from obscurity and opened the world before them with opportunities unknown before. It has brought light and hope to many a poor and wretched home, thrown away in the shadow of ignorance and neglect; and its fruits are invariably seen in improvements in every instance where its principles have been applied in a proper manner, and according to the instructions of the priesthood.

The motives that have actuated certain parties here to employ their time, talents and means, to hunt up and expose to the world everything unfavorable to this people, may well be doubted by every true and honest man and woman in the country. The "Mormon" people never did employ their time in searching for and parading any and everything disgraceful among any people, but in the true spirit of Christian love proclaimed the principles of life and salvation to all; after rescuing a degraded victim from the very jaws of destruction and applied the healing balm of the gospel to moral wounds that otherwise would have proved fatal. Any man and woman that lives according to the gospel of Christ, guided by the spirit of God, will entertain no fear or apprehension as to what these zealous moralists may try to do to annoy and intimidate this people, who value the truth of God more than all the precious stones of Golconda, and they are invulnerable in the hands of him that rules the powers of the earth, and for whom the hosts of heavens bow in submissive awe, and hell itself trembles before his wrath.

Never was a community more traduced by their enemies than the Latter-day Saints, both at home and abroad, which, in itself, is a strong evidence as to the heavenly origin of the great work, the sacred responsibility of which has been entrusted to our care by our Heavenly Father. And although much has been done in gathering home the scattered remnants of Israel, there are yet many waiting to receive the glad tidings of deliverance from bondage by the servants of God, and every man and woman can do a little in helping to work for the building up of the kingdom of God in the earth, and place an example before others, less advanced, to enable them to do their share in this glorious work. Happy is that person who uses this opportunity wisely and expends the energies of his soul for the proper purpose, because when once lost it will never come back again, and there are many men and women to-day who would willingly sacrifice all their earthly treasures if they could get that happiness and peace of mind back that they once enjoyed when they made covenant with God and received the consolations of his Holy Spirit. But those sunny days of bliss are past, and will never return to those who have forfeited their inheritance in Israel by wrecking their faith before reaching the safe shore. What are all the riches of the world compared with the golden treasure in our hearts inspired by the spirit of the gospel of salvation and faith in the promise of God to his chosen people! Our enemies do not comprehend this great responsibility resting on us, and what we lose by squandering those precious gifts that we received with the gospel, and opportunities never to return. J. S.

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