

John Taylor, now become "the invisible head of the church," was then editor of the church organ. In an editorial about the Kinderhook "find" he says: "Circumstances are daily transpiring which give additional testimony to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. . . The man who owns the plates has taken them away for a time, but has promised to return with them." So says Taylor, and he feels that this "find" will "go a good way to prove the authenticity of the Book of Mormon;" expressing finally his firm belief that "the seer, the seer, Joseph, the seer,"* will prove himself equal to the task of solving this new mystery. "We have no doubt," says he, "but Mr. Smith will be able to translate them." And Taylor, as the sequel shows, was fully justified in his confidence; a confidence expressed a second time in the *Times and Seasons* in the following lively manner:

"Why does the circumstance of the plates recently found in a mound in Pike County, Illinois, by Mr. Wiley, together with etymology and a thousand other things, GO TO PROVE THE BOOK OF MORMON TRUE? Answer: 'Because it is true.'"—[*Times and Seasons*, p. 406, Dec. 1, 1843.

But let us look at the trap with the translator's leg in it. Here it is, in the shape of a letter from Mr. Wilbur Fugate to Mr. James T. Cobb, in Salt Lake City:

MOUND STATION, ILL, JUNE 30, 1879.

Mr. Cobb:—

I received your letter in regard to those *plates*, and will say in answer that they are a HUMBUG, gotten up by Robert Wiley, Bridge Whitton and myself. Whitton is dead. I do not know whether Wiley is or not. None of the nine persons who signed the certificate knew the secret, except Wiley and I. We read in Pratt's prophecy that "Truth is yet to spring up out of the earth." We concluded to prove the prophecy by way of a joke. We soon made our plans and executed them. Bridge Whitton cut them (the plates) out of some pieces of copper; Wiley and I made the hieroglyphics † by making impressions on beeswax and filling them with acid and putting it on the plates. When they were finished we put them together with rust

* The title of a popular Mormon hymn composed by John Taylor.

† Wiley's name stands first and Fugate's last of the nine signers of the "certificate" touching the excavation.

made of nitric acid, old iron and lead, and bound them with a piece of hoop iron, covering them completely with the rust. Our plans worked admirably. A certain Sunday was appointed for digging. The night before, Wiley went to the Mound where he had previously dug to the depth of about eight feet, there being a flat rock that sounded hollow beneath, and put them under it. On the following morning quite a number of citizens were there to assist in the search, there being *two Mormon elders* present (Marsh and Sharp). The rock was soon removed, but some time elapsed before the plates were discovered. I finally picked them up and exclaimed, "A piece of pot metal!" Fayette Grubb snatched them from me and struck them against the rock and they fell to pieces. Dr. Harris examined them and said they had *hieroglyphics* on them. He took acid and removed the rust, and they were soon out on exhibition. Under this rock was dome-like in appearance, about three feet in diameter. There were a few bones in the last stage of decomposition, also a few pieces of pottery and charcoal. There was NO SKELETON found. Sharp, the Mormon elder, leaped and shouted for joy and said, Satan had appeared to him and told him not to go (to the diggings), it was a hoax of Fugate and Wiley's,—but at a later hour the Lord appeared and told him to go, the treasure was there.

The Mormons wanted to take the plates to Joe Smith, but we refused to let them go. Some time afterward a man assuming the name of Savage, of Quincy, borrowed the plates of Wiley to show to his literary friends there, and took them to Joe Smith. The same identical plates were returned to Wiley, who gave them to Professor McDowell, of St. Louis, for his Museum.

W. FUGATE.

STATE OF ILLINOIS, }
BROWN COUNTY. } ss.

W. Fugate, being first duly sworn, deposes and says that the above letter, containing an account of the plates found near Kinderhook, is true and correct, to the best of his recollection.

W. FUGATE.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 30th day of June, 1879.

JAY BROWN, J. P.

Since 1843 the Kinderhook plates have been relied upon by the Mormon leaders as a strong argument in favor of Joe's plates, from which he translated his new "bible," and, in fact, they are coin from the same mint almost, *id est*, silly fabrications. You don't find deep mysteries on any of them, like the dark formula, $21+4=$, but their characters seem inspired by a mind very much oc-

been, the kingdom of a chap nine feet high and perhaps two or three odd inches!

Don't you see it now in the trap, the *peeper's leg*? And still, gentle reader, you say: But surely the Mormon *leaders* do not know about such villainous frauds, 'twould make accomplices of all of them, and show that they are all deceivers, liars and hypocrites! Now just hear what was told me by a Mormon elder, an eye and ear witness: "A 'class of elders,' eleven or twelve, of whom I was one, was assembled in the Endowment House in 1858. Apostle Orson Pratt told us that he had been reading a work in which an account was given of the Kinderhook Plates. An archeological society had heard of the plates and they wanted to get a reliable account of them. They sent down to Kinderhook, Ill., two men to investigate the matter. These men had been there for two or three weeks without result. At last they learnt the names of the parties concerned, and that the plates were *made by a blacksmith*; they were told so by the artist himself. Pratt told the 'class' that he was well convinced that the plates were a fraud."

But let us return to the "Seer." The plates were taken to him and he made a rough estimate that their translation into English would make a volume of *some ten or twelve hundred pages!** Joseph, however, smartly refused to translate them until they were presented to some of the learned societies for translation. They *were* sent to one and returned with the word, *that they could not be translated*. And then Joseph went to work, aided by the "grace of God!"

Brigham Young and the other heads of the church knew the silly fraud of the "Book of Abraham" since the real translation of the papyrus by the French *savant*. They all know that the "*Spaulding myth*" is no myth, but the naked and damning truth. And still there is scarcely a book put forth on Mormonism that does not

* This detail is contained in another letter of Mr. Fugate to James T. Cobb; also the circumstance that Bridge Whitton, who cut out the plates, was a *blacksmith*.