

Salt Lake Valley when the news came of the discovery of gold in California. Members of the Mormon battalion who had dug the gold and helped discover it came home bringing with them gold dust and relating their experience concerning its abundance, and the ease with which it could be procured. Many of these men had been able to dig from one ounce of gold, worth sixteen dollars, up to six and ten ounces per day in the placer diggings, all the tools necessary being a pickaxe, a shovel and what was known as a rocker. If the people of Salt Lake valley had not been held together by a stronger tie than usually exists among men, they would incontinently have broken up their settlement, loaded their wagons and pack animals, and started immediately for the gold regions. But they had come to the Rocky Mountains for religious liberty. That was the chief incentive and only motive in making that terrible pilgrimage across the plains. To go, therefore, to California would be to abandon all their fondly cherished hopes concerning the religious liberty that they hoped to enjoy as a community in making their settlement in the mountain valleys. It meant the abandonment of the principle of gathering, which they looked upon as a feature of their religion commanded by God. To forsake, then, their newly-found home would have been in the opinion of the bulk of the people equivalent to an apostasy from their religion.

President Brigham Young used his great influence with the people in those days with the best effects. He saw the importance of holding out to them the advantages they would have by redeeming the soil where they were, and opening farms and planting orchards and cultivating gardens, and building for themselves homes where they and their children after them could live in peace and in happiness. He depleted in powerful language the uncertainty of the miner's life, how hazardous it was, that while some might be fortunate in gaining an ample remuneration for their toil, others would fail, and they would be unsettled, without fixed abodes; and he added prophetically that the men who stayed at home and cultivated their fields and their gardens would be richer at the end of a given period than those who went away in search of gold; that when the latter returned after expending months, and perhaps years, in California, there would be but few of them able to buy the improvements which their neighbors had made who had stayed at home. It is worthy of record that the experience of years proved how truthfully he had stated the case, and how clear his vision had been in foreseeing the results that would follow the going to California to dig gold and the staying at home to cultivate the earth and to build up homes. For of those who left, many lost their faith, many never returned, and of those who did return there were but few who came back sufficiently provided with means to arrange their circumstances as comfortably as were the circumstances of those who had remained in the valley.

For a number of years after the settlement of the valley there was but little surplus grain raised. The

constant exhortations of the leaders of the people were to store up grain and to make provision for from one to three years' bread ahead so that in the event of a failure of crops from any cause the settlements would not lack for food. As late as 1855, that is, some seven or eight years after the settlement of the valley, grasshoppers were so numerous that the entire crops were almost destroyed, and if it had not been for the provident care which the people had taken in storing up bread-stuff in anticipation of such a time of scarcity, many would have perished of starvation. As it was, if it had not been for the religious bond which held the people together, many no doubt would have perished. But there was a general disposition among the people to divide with their brethren and their sisters, and in this way, although many endured suffering and were pinched for want of food, all came through safely until another harvest was obtained. At that time sources of supply which are now easily reached by means of the railroads were beyond reach. The nearest place where food could be obtained on the west was eight hundred miles distant, and on the east about twelve hundred miles distant. To haul food with the means of transportation which was then in use, to feed hundreds and thousands of people, was out of the question. Hence there always was a feeling among the people to take care that food was stored up to as great an extent as possible to meet any exigency which might again arise. Subsequently, grasshoppers came year after year and devoured the crops, and the teachings which the people received from the leading men were enforced by the devastation which followed the appearance of these winged insects in the settlements.

It would have been insensate folly for a people thus situated to have turned their attention to the digging of precious metals, to wandering over the hills, through the canyons, and in the mountains prospecting for gold and silver. President Brigham Young and other leading men easily perceived this, and they used their influence against the people adopting such a course. The burden of their discourses upon these subjects was to cultivate the ground, to raise all the grains, the vegetables and the fruits that were necessary for the sustenance of themselves and others who should come within their borders, and also to do all they could to increase their flocks and their herds and build themselves comfortable homes—not be in a hurry to get gold or to get silver, but to await the good pleasure of the Lord, when they would have an abundance of these metals, when circumstances would be more favorable. Those who followed these counsels prospered. Some, however, tempted by the prospect of speedily enriching themselves, devoted their time and their means to prospecting for mines. In such instances, with scarcely an exception, those who did so impoverished themselves. Names might be mentioned, if it were necessary, to illustrate this; but the history of individuals who pursued this course is familiar to the people. Many became infatuated, mortgaged their homes, spent all their available means, and had nothing to show for it but holes in the ground.

There were also other reasons why the Latter-day Saints should not in those days devote themselves to the mining of the precious metals, one of the chief of which was that if any of them had discovered a valuable mine it was likely to be jumped, and partly feeling ran so high in those days that the discoverer or rightful owner stood in danger of having it taken from him.

But a change has taken place. Railroads have penetrated our Territory, bringing into our land all the supplies that we need. If a crop should be short in Utah, food could be obtained elsewhere. But our population itself has increased so that we raise a considerable surplus, and if a number of our citizens devote themselves to mining pursuits their absence is not felt upon the farms or in the orchards or gardens, or in the branches of manufacture. Mormons can own mines now under the changed conditions which have arisen, without danger of their being taken from them. They stand now in no more danger than other citizens, and the courts will protect them in their rights as much as they will others. At the present time, therefore, many Mormons have engaged to mining. That which would have been unwise on their part not many years ago may now be done with safety and not be considered imprudent. President Brigham Young during his lifetime was averse to the people spending their time in this pursuit, but he often said that the day would come when Utah would become a great mining country, and when the Latter-day Saints could engage in it upon the co-operative principle with entire safety. President John Taylor saw the chances that had taken place, and he offered no objections nor used any arguments against the people engaging in that pursuit, only he cautioned them to be careful and not risk all that they had in the hazardous work of digging for the precious metals.

These are some of the reasons for the alleged opposition of the Mormon people to the opening of mines. They were reasons which had their origin in the highest prudence. The experience of the past forty-five years has clearly vindicated the wisdom of the counsel that was given to them, and also the prudence of the course which they pursued. Salt Lake Valley, instead of being the beautiful place that it is, so charming and attractive to every visitor, would have gone back to its desert condition had the disposition to dig for gold and silver become the prevalent one. Civilization would have turned backward, and the settlement of this interior country would have been retarded for a long period of time.

Instead, therefore, of the people being blamed for their forbearance in not yielding to the gold fever, they should be praised for it. They resisted the influence, would not open their hearts to it, and stayed and made the settlement of Salt Lake valley a permanent one. At the time when hundreds of thousands of emigrants were crossing the continent and passing through Salt Lake valley on their way to the gold mines, filled with eager expectations of the riches they were going to obtain—men