

AMONG THE MORMONS.

SALT LAKE CITY, July 27th, 1870.

Forty miles from Ogden is Salt Lake City. It lies in the middle of a valley from twenty to thirty-five miles wide, with mountains on either side, capped with perpetual snow. It is in some respects a charming city—a hundred years in advance of many that are proud of their high Christian civilization. The streets are a hundred and thirty-two feet wide, with streams of water in each, bordered by long rows of trees; the gardens are spacious and rich with fruit; the residences are some of them elegant; and, on the whole, nothing is more surprising than that an utterly barren plain, skirting a salt lake in which nothing can live, inhabited only by Indians in 1847, should to-day what Salt Lake City is! In reaching it, we pass over a plain that is now what the site of the city was twenty-three years ago; and on that plain there is not vegetation enough on ten thousand acres to keep a flock of a hundred sheep from starvation.

How has this miracle been wrought? By irrigation. Along the base of the mountain ranges east of the city, streams of water, formed in the main by the melting snow on the eternal peaks, rush down the cañons, and, distributed over the plain below, give it its fertility. The most rigid system is followed in its distribution. The city appoints a water-master, and he, in turn, appoints a man in each ward, whose business it is to give to each landholder his share. If there is an abundant supply, as in the spring months, there is no restriction; but at this season of the year it is divided equally—each city lot of one acre and a quarter having only an hour in a week of a stream, which, passing into the enclosure, is not far from two feet wide and three inches deep; and when ever the hour comes, whether in the night or day, the owner of the field is obliged to give it his attention, or the next neighbor receives a double share.

For two years, the stream that waters the city has been very low; but when the supply is plentiful, the crop is sure. The source of this whole section is the grasshoppers. They transmute these fertile fields to deserts sometimes in a day. They fill the air, cover the streets and crawl everywhere. Hitherto, no way has been devised to do away with this intolerable nuisance. Sometimes, before their wings are developed, they are driven into water-ditches, and then caught in little nets by the bushel and burned. When there is straw to be had, a wide draw is laid across a field, and they are driven upon and under it, and then the straw, set on fire, fries the felons. But most effective is a troop of children with little bunches of brush, which standing on the margin of the field, can turn aside (sometimes) the invaders, sending them on to another man's land, whose family is less.

Three times this year they have eaten everything green in Salt Lake City, and, to a considerable extent, in the plains above and below, and the inhabitants are in dread of a fourth visitation; and this is the fourth year since their desolating advent. Of course, the crops have been amazingly increased, and the best informed man in the Territory told me that it was not improbable that the time might come when the whole settlement would be considerably short of food, which it would be beyond their power to buy.

The Mormon Tabernacle astounds one. It covers nearly an acre of ground, and the dome looks like an immense egg, of equal size at the ends, cut into two parts, and supported by pillars thirty feet high around its outermost edge. It is built wholly of wood, brick and stone—all the timber in the immense dome being planned with wood or tied with green rawhide, which, dried, becomes like a band of brass. The view from the top of this structure is one of strange beauty. Beneath you is the city—a forest of trees dotted with houses; westward, the long line of the lake; about you everywhere, the snow-capped mountains, reaching to the clouds; each with a different configuration; around you, an atmosphere so clear that the summits, thirty miles in the distance, seem as though a man might reach them by a brisk walk of a couple of hours; and over you a sky like Italy or the south of France. But, for all this, what it was that could possibly induce the selection of such a barren waste, where nothing but sage-brush and grease-wood ever grew, to plant thirty thousand people, God only knows. It was to shun a civilization that denounces some of their practices, Brigham Young did not show his accustomed sagacity.

Formerly, it took the pilgrims hitherward four months to reach this spot from the Missouri River; but they demonstrated that the transit was possible; and it has come to pass, in these later years, that where a man can travel a railroad can be built.

President George A. Smith, first councillor to Brigham Young, treated our party with marked courtesy. He has a complete understanding of all the affairs of the Territory, and his information with regard to the effect of their peculiar system of promoting vegetable growth was invaluable.

As to the future of Utah, little can be definitely settled. Of course, they can never compete with the prairies in raising grain, and, as to fruit, although I saw finer apples than I ever saw in New England, yet the crop cannot be large or sure.

Some impressions with regard to Brigham Young I have been asked to correct. Instead of having fifty wives, he has but sixteen. His children number forty-nine, instead of hundreds. He has a school-house of his own, and a most comfortable one. The theatre told me that his twenty-two daughters in a private box were among the most intelligent-looking girls that they had ever seen.

A talk of considerable length with Hon. W. H. Hooper, their Delegate, whose arrival in the Territory was hailed with great manifestations of delight, convinced me that there is some fear with regard to the future of Utah, and if some more inaccessible locality was some time sought, it would not be an entirely unexpected thing. But the dinner-bell warns me to close this letter, though my notes are half untouched. At two o'clock we bid the city good-by.

We have had good treatment, good fare, and I leave with a profounder astonishment than ever at the power of man to change by the simplest processes the whole aspect of nature—to make a desert blossom like the rose. At six o'clock, Friday morning, I hope to see San Francisco, and then the great Pacific Slope, and possibly Oregon, to which I have been most cordially invited by the distinguished Senator from that State, Judge Williams, and his most estimable wife. H. L. R.

Z. C. M. I.
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