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OF

MORMONISM;

OR

A FAIR AND CANDID STATEMENT OF FACTS
ILLUSTRATIVE OF MORMON PRINCIPLES,
MORMON POLICY, AND MORMON
CHARACTETR,

BY MORE THAN FORTY EYE-WITNESSES,

COMPILED BY

N. SLATER, A. M.

COLOMA, CAL.,
HARMON & SPRINGER

1851.

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INTRODUCTION.

The California emigrants whose misfortune it was to be thrown into Salt Lake valley to spend the past winter, feeling aggrieved at the treatment they received at the hands of the Mormons, intended, on reaching California, to write letters to their friends in the states, informing them of their grievances, and advising them not to come to Salt Lake valley to spend a winter so miserably as they had done, unless compelled by stern necessity. This was their intention until they reached Carson's valley, on the east side of the Nevada or California mountains, and for two weeks after the first trains began to arrive there.

But as the emigrants began to accumulate in that valley, waiting for the snow to settle upon the mountains so that the teams could cross over into California, and related to each other their personal experience in Salt Lake valley, and the astounding facts which had come to their knowledge, the idea was suggested to their minds that instead of each individual's writing his own private letter to his friends in the states, the better plan would be to embody the facts in the possession of all in a large pamphlet, containing brief reasonings and logical deductions from those facts, and send copies of the same to their friends at home. The considerations which led to this course were such as the following, viz:

1st, Such a work would give a more full and complete view of the state of things in Salt Lake valley than could be communicated in the compass of a single letter.

2nd, It would be more likely to gain credence and have influence, if the facts should be furnished by a great number of eye witnesses, than it would coming from the pen of a single individual.

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It has been the design to admit none but authentic, reliable facts, such as the witnesses were willing to testify to under oath before any court of justice, if called upon to do so. Nor have we obtained only a small part of the facts which could have been, had we thought of doing so before we left the valley. But had we made the effort whilst there, we probably should not have been able to obtain only a small part of the characteristic facts which have heretofore transpired in reference to this most strange and notorious people. We are satisfied there are facts enough of the character which this pamphlet contains, could they be collected, to fill at least one large volume.

It is not the design of the following pages to give a full representation of either Mormon principles, Mormon policy or Mormon character. Only a sketch is intended. Yet we trust it will be sufficient to enable the reader to form a just idea of the principles of action, policy and character, of the Mormon people.

The emigrants in making these statements are not prompted by feelings of personal animosity, retaliation or revenge, but by a sense of duty which as United States citizens we owe to ourselves, our country and the world. Should the Mormon people receive this testimony as kindly on their part, as it is given on ours, they would take heed to the reproof and amend their ways.

We do not wish needlessly to create a public sentiment against them. We wish simply to tell the truth. If it widens the breach between them and other people, we cannot help it. Their own conduct is the cause. It is not for the sake of persecution that these pages appear before the public. Were it not that the interests of the United States citizens in passing through Salt Lake valley, and especially in wintering there, are sensibly affected by the state of things in the Mormon community, we should not trouble ourselves to make mention of them.

We do not wish to be understood that all the Mormon people are equally bad. There are many individuals among them who are naturally kind, neighborly and obliging, and who if left to their own course uninfluenced by Mormonism, would be worthy citizens, and would gain universal friendship among all who should become acquainted with them. For many of these we feel due respect. The good qualities they may have are not produced by Mormonism, but are possessed in spite of it. It is not the genius of Mormonism to make folks better but to make them worse. The system is worse than the practice of the members

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would be independently of its influence. The leaders in forming such a system are far more [~~sic~~—more] to blame than the private members of the church, many of whom are sincere in their adherence to it.

Those emigrants who passed through Salt Lake valley last season and came on to California, being there only a few days or a few weeks, had but little reason, as a general thing, to complain. From policy, the Mormons would treat them well, wishing a continuance of like patronage in time to come. Besides, the number of emigrants in the valley some of the time was so great (two or three thousand) as to exert a restraining influence upon the Mormons by way of intimidation.

Nor do we complain of the treatment we received when we first arrived in the valley. The cloven foot did not appear until the winter had closed in upon us so that we could not get away. Some few individual emigrants fortunately fell into good hands and spent a very comfortable winter, but the great majority of them felt their condition to be no better than Egyptian bondage.

We suppose there may have been a few bad characters among the emigrants. But the emigrants generally were intelligent, respectable citizens from at least three fourths of the states of the American Union, and from a great number of places in those states, generally strangers to each other until thrown together in Salt Lake valley, and not having very good opportunities even there to become acquainted on account of being scattered throughout the Mormon settlements, and the strict system of censorship exercised over them.

So far as any of the emigrants were guilty of misdemeanors, we disapproved of their conduct, and had no more disposition to uphold rascality in them than in Mormons or any body else. Nor would we do the least thing to screen them from fair and impartial justice. Our motto is, let all stand or fall according to their intrinsic merits. And let all have a fair and equal chance for justice in all our civil courts according to the customs and usages of civilized nations.

It is not the design of this work to meddle with the religious system of the Mormons. It is their civil aspect at which we look. Incidentally, some references will be made to some of their tenets when intimately connected with the subjects upon which we treat, and therefore unavoidable. It is their conduct in a social and civil point of view which we wish to discuss. It is one of the excellences of our republican government that it allows free toleration of all religious opinions. By its or-

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ganization all are allowed to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. We presume no one wishes to disturb or abridge the religious privileges of the Mormons. We are perfectly willing they should enjoy them as freely as any other people. Among the emigrants who spent the winter in Salt Lake valley were persons of all religious opinions, and persons of no religious opinions. Any proposition to interfere with their religious system, as such, would not have been entertained by them.

The facts contained in this work have been furnished by a great number of eye witnesses. In receiving their testimony the same caution has been exercised to arrive at the truth which is employed in courts of justice in the examination of witnesses. Whenever there has been any discrepancy in the testimony of different individuals the whole testimony has been rejected. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is what we have sought. We are perfectly satisfied the facts in the main are correct. If there are any deviations from the truth even in minor and unimportant points we have yet to learn. If any misstatements have been made the blame belongs to those who related the facts.

If any persons should feel disposed to doubt any of the statements contained in these pages, we refer them to any of the witnesses who have given in their testimony, above referred to, who are now here in California, and whose names will be given if necessary; to the 450 emigrants now in California who spent the past winter in Salt Lake valley; to the 100 emigrants now in Oregon who spent the winter in Salt Lake valley; to all the emigrants who spent the past winter there, amounting to nearly 1000, and to all United States citizens who have been intimately acquainted with Mormon conduct and Mormon character for the last fifteen years, for the truth of the representation of the Mormon people given in this work. We are willing to abide their decision. We ask the reader to give these pages a candid and careful perusal without either prejudice or prepossession, and judge for himself.

CHAPTER I.

Among the thousands of United States citizens who left their homes for the California gold mines last season, quite a percentage were compelled by various causes to spend the winter in Salt Lake valley. These causes were such as the following, viz: sickness, failure of teams, scantiness of means, and lateness of the season. The Mormon people held out great inducements to the emigrants to remain, by telling them what large amounts they could earn in the course of the winter, and promptly paying them cash, at first, for labor. Many by these specious encouragements were induced to tarry for the winter who otherwise would have gone on to California, their much desired destination.

Much enquiry was made by some of the emigrants respecting southern routes to California which might either shorten the time of reaching the Pacific coast, or at least, be safely traveled later in the season. One of these routes was that leading out west from the city along the south end of Salt Lake, across a saline marsh or desert seventy five or eighty miles in width, intersecting the northern route near the Humboldt mountains and the head waters of Mary's river. Another which had been represented to some of the emigrants before reaching the valley as practicable and the shortest of all, led from the city southwesterly along the southern portion of the great California Basin, and entered the southern part of California through Walker's Pass in the Nevada mountains. It is said this pass is better than any other over these lofty and much dreaded mountains, and can be traveled in the winter. The other southern route about which inquiry was made led from Salt Lake city about two hundred miles south over the southern rim of the great California Basin, and thence southerly along the north west side of the Colorado river to Williams' Ranch and San Diego. On this route are three deserts, one fifty five miles wide, one thirty, and one twenty.

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But invariably no encouragement was given by the Mormons to any of these routes. The northern one around the north end of Salt Lake extending into the edge of Oregon, and passing over the Nevada mountains near the head waters of Carson's river, though having several deserts, the widest of which is forty miles without grass or water, was always recommended as being the only possible or practicable route by which to reach the gold diggings. It was also said and well known to the emigrants, that ordinarily it would be exceedingly perilous to be later than the first of October in crossing the Nevada mountains on this route. Consequently, unless the emigrants could leave Salt Lake valley sufficiently early to pass over by that time, they would be compelled to spend the winter there.

The Mormons had ferries on the Weber and Bear rivers on the northern route, the first about forty, and the second about eighty miles from the city, at each of which from five to eight dollars were charged to the emigrants for each team, and for persons on horse back, on foot, and for loose stock, the prices were in proportion. These ferries were kept by individuals, but all the Mormon members being required by the regulations of their church to pay in the form of tithing, one tenth of all they make by the business they pursue into the church fund, and all belonging to this church being indirectly benefitted by the increase of that fund, would naturally use their influence to induce emigrants, if they could not retain them in the valley, to take the northern route.

Several motives influenced the minds of the Mormons to make efforts to retain emigrants in the valley through the winter, at least such a number as they could easily control. A larger number than they could manage they did not want there at any one time. They wanted their services as laborers in the prosecution of the different kinds of business carried on by Mormons in the valley. The emigrants being transient persons and not established in any permanent business, could be employed at lower rates of wages than those for which Mormons were willing to labor, consequently those who had to employ large numbers of hands would make quite a speculation by such an operation. Besides, they were often better workmen in the various mechanic arts. A sufficient number of Mormon hands could not be employed at any price in the early fall to answer the demand. More money could be made by business men in employing emigrants than in employing Mormons not only by the lesser wages given, but by an easier mode of paying them, as the

reader will have opportunity to see in the perusal of the following pages.

Another motive which prompted efforts to retain emigrants, was the tax of two per cent on their property which they would have to pay to the Mormon authorities if they should remain through the winter. The emigrants, however, had not the knowledge of this requisition, when they consented to remain, nor until the latter part of winter. The Mormons also hoped that by remaining through the winter, numbers of them might embrace Mormonism, join the church and become permanent settlers in the valley. A few individuals, generally supposed not from principle but from policy, did join the Mormon church. The number however was quite small. Most of the emigrants had less and less disposition to do so, the longer they remained, and the more developments of the mysteries and fruits of the system they saw.

Notwithstanding the efforts made to either lead them around the north end of Salt Lake, or retain them in the valley through the winter, companies having obtained, by one means and another, some information respecting the southern route by Williams' Ranch, were frequently starting all the fall until the month of November. If the emigrants had generally had correct knowledge of this route on their arrival in the valley, the most of them would have made arrangements to leave Salt Lake some time in the fall and prosecute their journey to the Pacific coast. It is true, this route is longer than the northern one, and there is more desert country to be crossed, yet many of the emigrants would have preferred to travel that route in the winter season to remaining in the valley as they could thereby reach California much earlier in the spring, it being impossible to cross the Nevada mountains on foot or on horseback before May, and with wagons before June.

Some of the emigrants were the more easily persuaded to remain in the valley from having become very much wearied in the journey from the states thus far, and ardently desiring the repose of even a temporary stopping place. It seemed a great task to finish out the balance of so long and laborious a journey as that from Salt Lake to California, (about 800 miles the northern route to Sacramento City) without some respite in their toils and fatigues, especially to those who had not been accustomed to hardships in the states.

Such provisions as the soil produced were abundant in the valley. Emigrants had reason to believe that there was an ample supply for all

who should remain through the winter, and therefore if they had the means to purchase, they would not starve. The Mormons repeatedly said business was dull in California, that there was a scarcity of provisions there, that it would be difficult for one to obtain his board the winter season for his services, and that the emigrants could reach that country as early in the spring as would be desirable. Every thing was said by the leaders publicly and privately that could well be said, to discourage both Mormons and emigrants from going to California and persuade them to remain in the valley.

It was with great reluctance and repeated struggles of mind, that the emigrants finally surrendered their long cherished intention of going through to California the same season they started, and came to the conclusion to make Salt Lake valley their tarrying place through the winter. It was grievous to them to be disappointed in the calculations they made when they left the states, and thwarted in the accomplishment of their favorite plans. They still had a lurking belief that it would be better for them in a pecuniary point of view to reach California last fall, become acquainted with the country, earn what they could through the winter, and be ready for the successful prosecution of business in the spring, than to remain in Salt Lake valley through the winter, arrive in California late the following spring and have every thing to learn after their arrival. But all things weighed and balanced, they at length concluded to acquiesce in what appeared to them at the time to be the demand of preponderating circumstances, and while away the tedious months of winter as best they could.

The number of emigrants who thus spent the winter in Salt Lake valley in pursuance of such decision is not precisely known to us, but is supposed to have been at least, eight or nine hundred, and may possibly have been one thousand. One hundred including men women and children went to Oregon, and four hundred and fifty (three hundred and fifty men and one hundred women and children) came to California the northern route the past spring. We are informed that near two hundred emigrants went the southern route to the southern part of California along with a large train of 500 Mormons. Some small companies went back to the states, and many remained in the valley not being able to get away for the want of means.

But the point of staying for the winter having been settled, the emigrants began immediately to cast about and make arrangements for the

prosecution of such kinds of business as were at hand. Some engaged in one thing, and some in another, finding employ wherever they could. Some engaged in the harvest field, some in cutting hay, some in carpenter and joiner work, some in blacksmithing, some in shoemaking, some in tayloring [**sic**], some in drawing firewood from the cañons (in Salt Lake commonly spelt kanyons) of the mountains to the city, some in burning charcoal, some in ditching for fencing purposes, some in making shingles, some in cutting and drawing saw logs to the mills, some in teaching, some in the medical profession, &c. &c. Some persons resorted to manual labor who had not been much accustomed to it heretofore because there was nothing else to which they could turn their hands.

Thus distributed in the different avocations and employments which were at hand, they industriously busied themselves during the fall months. There was a general expectation among the emigrants that they would not only pay their current expenses by their labor whilst there, but would be able also to considerably better their circumstances over and above their living, so that they would be able to leave the valley with a greater amount of property than they brought into it. This, however, was not the fact. There was a very general disappointment among the emigrants as to the results of their winter's employ. They did not find themselves as well off in the spring as they expected in the fall they should be after having the avails of their winter's labor. As a general thing they not only did not make any thing, but left the valley poorer than they entered it. The reasons of this sad reverse of the reasonable expectations cherished in the fall will appear in the sequel.

The emigrants in the early part of the fall were quite well treated by most of the Mormons. It is a universal custom among them to call each other brothers and sisters. The use of these endearing appellations in their social intercourse, naturally cultivates their social affections towards one another. Their clanishness, their isolated condition, to a great extent shut out from all other communities, and the genius of their society organization, containing multifarious offices and relationships, all contribute to heighten the force of affection and attach the people the more strongly to each other, to their fraternity, and to their system. When emigrants are among them most of the Mormon members, if left to the untrameled exercise of the generous impulses of their social natures, would treat them kindly, transferring a part of their affections to

the emigrants which they were wont to bestow upon one another. This was the case for some time after our arrival in the valley. We then felt that we were among a social and kind people.

But late in the fall and especially in the early winter an over reaching and hard hearted policy began to be manifested throughout the valley. The wages of emigrants were reduced, cash was withheld from them by counsel of the leaders in payment of their dues, there were fewer openings for business and less demand for labor. Many of the emigrants had more or less difficulty in finding situations where they could be employed through the winter, and some could scarcely find enough to do to pay for their board. The most of the emigrants were necessitated [sic] to labor for such compensation as the Mormons saw fit to give, and for such kind of pay as they saw fit to make. There was no alternative. Some of the emigrants had sold the Mormons property for which they were to receive their pay in the winter or spring.

The heads of the Mormon church had become greatly alarmed at the vast amounts of money which their people had freely paid to the merchants for their commodities. In some instances four or five thousand dollars per day had been taken in for goods at individual stores when first opened. The people having been so long deprived of the opportunity of purchasing adequate supplies, rushed in large crowds to the stores from all parts of the settlements, even 20, 30, and 40 miles distant, to obtain such things as they wanted. The inhabitants were the more eager to purchase because they did not suppose there was a sufficient supply for the demand, especially of some kinds of goods, and knew that those who should come first would be first served. They paid their money the more freely to the merchants, because they had obtained a large proportion of it from the California emigrants who had passed early in the season by selling them such articles as they wanted at enormous prices, asking from twenty five cents to one dollar per pound for flour, and for other things in proportion. Having obtained their money easily it went freely.

The merchants who had brought their goods from the states must use the money they had received to either pay for the goods already purchased or others which they wished to purchase. In either case the money would go out of the valley to the states. This would diminish the amount in circulation and make it scarce among the people. Considerable effort was made by the Mormon leaders to prevent the people from purchas-

ing so large amounts of goods, and the merchants from carrying off what they had already received. In order to pacify the leading Mormons, he suffered to prosecute their wonted business with less hindrance, and secure a greater amount of patronage, some of the merchants joined the church.

But the balance of trade being unavoidably against the Mormon people on account of their inland location, and consequently so far as that trade is carried on, necessarily draining the country of its circulating medium, the plan was devised of withholding from emigrants who were to tarry through the winter, all cash so far as it could be done under any plausible pretext.* This was designed to compensate in part for the large amounts already paid to the merchants. If the nearly 1000 emigrants in the valley should be paid their dues in cash, it would still further drain the country of its money. They wished to guard against this, and the leaders counseled the people not to pay the emigrants any money when they could possibly avoid it, and not suffer them to carry any out of the valley if they had any plausible excuse for getting it away from them. By this edict from head quarters, the sympathies of the Mormon people were dried up, their attitude and their conduct towards the emigrants suddenly changed, and they seemed more disposed to injure than to befriend them.

Thus were the emigrants oppressed through the past winter. But the state of things grew worse and worse from fall to spring. Not only was there a diminution in the wages paid for labor, but there was a deterioration in the quality of the pay, and an increasing reluctance to pay any thing whatever. Many of the emigrants who had either loaned the Mormons money, sold them property upon credit, or labored for them, were compelled to come away without their pay. Every expedient was resorted to, to draw upon the resources of the emigrants, and cripple them in getting sufficient outfits to leave the valley. Some could not get away without aid from their friends. Others, not able to get this aid, had to remain in the valley. Thus the emigrants were sorely abused and oppressed **by a people professing to be religious**, but who in point of fact, when under the influence of Mormon edicts, are as clanish, hard-

* That there was a general concerted plan to this effect became apparent to the emigrants in the beginning of winter. They discovered that it was the design to either pay them in truck of one kind and another, or to defer payment until spring.

hearted, over reaching, and reckless of the rights of others, as either swindlers or robbers.

This line of policy was adopted and pursued by the Mormon church when it had large amounts of money in its treasury. They were more influenced by self than by the claims of justice. They would sooner hoard up the money to carry on their favorite plans of business, than to use it to pay their honest debts. One of their leading men the past spring stated to an emigrant that the church had \$50,000 in coin on hand in its treasury to send to the states to aid poor brethren in moving to Salt Lake valley the present season. Cash was too good a species of property for California emigrants to bring away from Salt Lake valley, but it answered very well for the latter day saints to use in bringing in their brethren from the United States and from Europe.

Emigrants stand no chance of obtaining justice by legal process in the Mormon courts when their opponent is a Mormon. The Mormon courts in all such cases invariably favor the Mormon members even at the expense of justice, and contrary to all the evidence adduced. Some of the more candid and upright among them acknowledge this to be their policy and advise emigrants to avoid law suits with Mormons on that account. There was a general impression among the emigrants that there was no manner of use in going to law with Mormons in Mormon courts for the recovery of debts. In almost every instance, those who resorted to the law to collect their dues, not only failed to collect any thing, but had either a part or the whole of the cost to pay also. It is one of the strangest of the most strange things that however the suit may issue, whether in favor of the one or the other of the parties, the emigrant is almost as certain to have either a part or all the cost to pay as the sun is to rise. If an emigrant is sued, and procures a non-suit he often has the cost to pay. If he sues a Mormon and the evidence in his favor is so clear as to be irresistible, still he will, in some mysterious way, have either a part or all the cost to pay. The costs, too, especially where emigrants have them to pay, are enormous. Says an emigrant, who spent the winter in Salt Lake valley, "I have had some suits there and have become somewhat acquainted with their legal proceedings from which I have learned that the cost of a summons from a justice of the peace is six dollars, the service by a constable six dollars, the charge for mileage one dollar and fifty cents each mile, and other fees either in proportion or still more oppressive." He further adds, "In one

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suit which I had, the court said I was not guilty, but should pay the cost of suit.”

Some of the Mormons who hold offices, said to certain emigrants, if they should not show favor to their brethren, but should administer impartial justice to emigrants as well as to **Mormons, they would lose their offices; that they were counseled from head quarters not only to favor their brethren, but also to endeavor to get away from the traveler passing through their country, his money and effects in every way in which it could be done, from common trade to highway robbery and murder.** These are startling allegations, but the emigrants have become thoroughly convinced of their truth by the most indubitable evidence furnished them in the process of their own bitter experience. They were disinclined to believe evil of the Mormons faster than demonstrative evidence multiplying thick and fast around them irresistibly forced conviction upon their minds. They could not readily believe the evidence of their own eyes. Their belief did not keep pace with the evidence, but lingered in the rear. Especially was this the case with those who had had but little previous acquaintance with Mormonism. They were not prepared to believe Mormon principles and Mormon policy as bad as they really were.