

Settlers in the West

Historical background: Jules Remy was a French traveller and naturalist who visited Utah in 1855 with fellow naturalist Julius Brenchley, a Brit. This account was published in English six years later. At the time of Remy's arrival Mormons had lived in Salt Lake for under a decade.

Remy's visit to Utah predated the so-called "Utah War" between Mormon settlers and the United States government forces in 1857. The year-long conflict began chiefly around the issue of Mormon polygamy but was largely bloodless and resolved through negotiation.

... There are in Great Salt Lake City, - and we enumerate them according to the numerical importance of the contingent furnished by each nation, - English, Scotch, Canadians, Americans (these are for the most part the original converts of Joseph Smith), Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, Germans, Swiss, Poles, Russians, Italians, French, Negroes, Hindoos, and Australians; we even saw a Chinese there. All these people, bred in different and often diverse faiths for the most part brought up in the most gross ignorance and dissonant prejudices; some whose lives, on the whole, have been neither particularly good nor bad others, and the far greater number, it may be, living in the habitual indulgence of the most brutal instincts; all different from one another, in country, language, customs, laws, nationality, and tastes, have flocked together, and flock together everyday, to live more than brothers in perfect harmony in the center of American continent, where they form a new nation, independent, compact, and, in fact, as little under the control of the government of the United States which takes them under its protection, as of the firmans [letter of protection] of the Grand Turk. There is something in this to induce one to believe in the possibility of a universal fusion, and the future unity of nations into one and the same great commonwealth. Such, indeed, is the hope and the aim, more or less avowed, of this people, which styles itself the privileged posterity of Abraham.

-A Journey to Great Salt-Lake City, Jules Remy (1861)

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1. How could Remy's background and the time in which he is writing influence his interpretation of settlement in Salt Lake City?
2. How does Remy describe settlement in the West? Explain your answer using textual evidence.

Historical background: Though known now more for his literary works including *Treasure Island* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Robert Louis Stevenson was a highly regarded British travel writer in the late 19th century. In 1879 Stevenson travelled from the British Isles to the Eastern Seaboard of the United States from where he journeyed to California by train. "Across the Plains," an account of that journey published in 1883, included the excerpt below.

At the time of Stevenson's travels many Americans were growing increasingly hostile towards Chinese immigration. In 1882 the American federal government would pass into law the Chinese Exclusion Act barring all new Chinese immigration to the United States. Renewed in 1892 and made permanent in 1902, the Chinese Exclusion Act would not be repealed until the Second World War.

Of all stupid ill feelings, the sentiment of my fellow Caucasians towards our companions in the Chinese car was the most stupid and the worst. They seemed never to have looked at them, listened to them, or thought of them, but hated them A PRIORI. The Mongols were their enemies in that cruel and treacherous battle-field of money. They could work better and cheaper in half a hundred industries, and hence there was no calumny too idle for the Caucasians to repeat,

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and even to believe. They declared them hideous vermin, and affected a kind of choking in the throat when they beheld them. Now, as a matter of fact, the young Chinese man is so like a large class of European women, that on raising my head and suddenly catching sight of one at a considerable distance, I have for an instant been deceived by the resemblance. I do not say it is the most attractive class of our women, but for all that many a man's wife is less pleasantly favored. Again, my emigrants declared that the Chinese were dirty. I cannot say they were clean, for that was impossible upon the journey; but in their efforts after cleanliness they put the rest of us to shame. We all pigged and stewed in one infamy, wet our hands and faces for half a minute daily on the platform, and were unashamed. But the Chinese never lost an opportunity, and you would see them washing their feet — an act not dreamed of among ourselves — and going as far as decency permitted to wash their whole bodies. I may remark by the way that the dirtier people are in their persons the more delicate is their sense of modesty. A clean man strips in a crowded boathouse; but he who is unwashed slinks in and out of bed without uncovering an inch of skin. Lastly, these very foul and malodorous Caucasians entertained the surprising illusion that it was the Chinese wagon, and that alone, which stank. I have said already that it was the exceptions and notably the freshest of the three.

These judgments are typical of the feeling in all Western America. The Chinese are considered stupid, because they are imperfectly acquainted with English. They are held to be base, because their dexterity and frugality enable them to underbid the lazy, luxurious Caucasian. They are said to be thieves; I am sure they have no monopoly of that. They are called cruel; the Anglo-Saxon and the cheerful Irishman may each reflect before he bears the accusation. I am told, again, that they are of the race of river pirates, and belong to the most despised and dangerous class in the Celestial Empire. But if this be so, what remarkable pirates have we here! and what must be the virtues, the industry, the education, and the intelligence of their superiors at home!

-*Across the Plains*, Robert Louise Stevenson (1891)

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are necessarily after the same pattern and their children likely to be fit representatives of such a conjunction; and then let it be remembered that for forty years these creatures have been driven, driven, driven, relentlessly! and mobbed, beaten, and shot down; cursed, despised, expatriated; banished to a remote desert, whither they journeyed gaunt with famine and disease, disturbing the ancient solitudes with their lamentations and marking the long way with graves of their dead--and all because they were simply trying to live and worship God in the way which they believed with all their hearts and souls to be the true one. Let all these things be borne in mind, and then it will not be hard to account for the deathless hatred which the Mormons bear our people and our government.

That hatred has "fed fat its ancient grudge" ever since Mormon Utah developed into a self-supporting realm and the church waxed rich and strong. Brigham as Territorial Governor made it plain that Mormondom was for the Mormons. The United States tried to rectify all that by appointing territorial officers from New England and other anti-Mormon localities, but Brigham [Young, a Mormon leader] prepared to make their entrance into his dominions difficult. Three thousand United States troops had to go across the plains and put these gentlemen in office. And after they were in office they were as helpless as so many stone images. They made laws which nobody minded and which could not be executed. The federal judges opened court in a land filled with crime and violence and sat as holiday spectacles for insolent crowds to gape at--for there was nothing to try, nothing to do nothing on the dockets! And if a Gentile brought a suit, the Mormon jury would do just as it pleased about bringing in a verdict, and when the judgment of the court was rendered no Mormon cared for it and no officer could execute it. Our Presidents shipped one cargo of officials after another to Utah, but the result was always the same--they sat in a blight for awhile they fairly feasted on scowls and insults day by day, they saw every attempt to do their official duties find its reward in darker and darker looks, and in secret threats and warnings of a more and more dismal nature--and at last they either succumbed and became despised tools and toys of the Mormons, or got scared and discomforted beyond all endurance and left the Territory. If a

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brave officer kept on courageously till his pluck was proven, some pliant Buchanan or Pierce [presidents during the 1850s] would remove him and appoint a stick in his place. In 1857 General Harney came very near being appointed Governor of Utah. And so it came very near being Harney governor and Cradlebaugh judge!-- two men who never had any idea of fear further than the sort of murky comprehension of it which they were enabled to gather from the dictionary. Simply (if for nothing else) for the variety they would have made in a rather monotonous history of Federal servility and helplessness, it is a pity they were not fated to hold office together in Utah.

Up to the date of our visit to Utah, such had been the Territorial record. The Territorial government established there had been a hopeless failure, and Brigham Young was the only real power in the land. He was an absolute monarch--a monarch who defied our President--a monarch who laughed at our armies when they camped about his capital--a monarch who received without emotion the news that the august Congress of the United States had enacted a solemn law against polygamy, and then went forth calmly and married twenty-five or thirty more wives.

-Roughing It, Mark Twain (1872)

1. Compare and contrast Twain's and Remy's description of the Mormon Utah? Where do their interpretations agree? Where do their interpretations differ?
2. Thinking about authorship, how could Twain and Remy's frame of reference impact their conclusions on Mormon Utah? Explain.

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In the space below, write one-to-two paragraphs on the following prompt: Characterize the perception of settlers in the West as viewed by native-born and international travellers.

A complete and thorough answer will attend to change over time, context, and authorship.