of the bare flowerless settlements in the West. But the sight of a group of Chinamen here and there at work on the line dispels the momentary illusion.

Winding rapidly down a succession of gorges or cañons (for every valley in the West seems to be known as a cañon), the traveller finds at last that he has entered the "Great Basin" of North America, and has arrived near the margin of the Great Salt Lake. Looking back, he perceives that the route by which he has come is one of many transverse valleys hollowed out of the flanks of the noble range of the Wahsatch Mountains. This range serves at once as the western boundary of the plateau country and as the eastern rim of the Great Basin, into which it plunges as a colossal rampart from an average height of some 4000 feet above the plain, though some of its isolated summits rise to more than twice that altitude. From the base of this great mountain-wall the country stretches westward as a vast desert plain, in a slight depression of which lies the Great Salt Lake. By industriously making use of the drainage from their mountain barrier, the Mormons have converted the strip of land between the base of the heights and the edge of the water into fertile fields and well-kept gardens.

Everybody knows that the Great Basin has no outlet to the ocean: yet nobody can see the scene with his own eyes and refuse to admit the sense of strange novelty with which it fills his mind. One's first desire is naturally to get to the lake. From a distance it looks blue enough, and not different from other sheets of water. But on a nearer view its shore is seen to be a level plain of salt-crusted mud. So gently does this plain slip under the water that the actual margin of the lake is not very sharply drawn. The water has a heavy, motionless, lifeless aspect, and is practically destitute of living creatures of every kind.