

Virginia City Territorial Enterprise
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“Mark Twain” in the Metropolis

To a Christian who has toiled months and months in Washoe; whose hair bristles from a bed of sand, and whose soul is caked with a cement of alkali dust; whose nostrils know no perfume but the rank odor of sage-brush—and whose eyes know no landscape but barren mountains and desolate plains; where the winds blow, and the sun blisters, and the broken spirit of the contrite heart finds joy and peace only in Limburger cheese and lager beer—unto such a Christian, verily the Occidental Hotel is Heaven on the half shell. He may even secretly consider it to be Heaven on the entire shell, but his religion teaches a sound Washoe Christian that it would be sacrilege to say it.

Here you are expected to breakfast on salmon, fried oysters and other substantial from 6 till half-past 12; you are required to lunch on cold fowl and so forth, from half-past 12 until 3; you are obliged to skirmish through a dinner comprising such edibles as the world produces, and keep it up, from 3 until half-past 7; you are then compelled to lay siege to the tea-table from half-past 7 until 9 o'clock, at which hour, if you refuse to move upon the supper works and destroy oysters gotten up in all kinds of seductive styles until 12 o'clock, the landlord will certainly be offended, and you might as well move your trunk to some other establishment. [It is a pleasure to me to observe, incidentally, that I am on good terms with the landlord yet.]

Why don't you send Dan down into the Gould & Curry mine, to see whether it has petered out or not, and if so, when it will be likely to peter in again. The extraordinary decline of that stock has given rise to the wildest surmises in the way of accounting for it, but among the lot there is harm in but one, which is the expressed belief on the part of a few that the bottom has fallen out of the mine. Gould & Curry is climbing again, however.

It has been many a day since San Francisco has seen livelier times in her theatrical department than at present. Large audiences are to be found nightly at the Opera House, the Metropolitan, the Academy of Music, the American, the New Idea, and even the Museum, which is not as good a one as Barnum's. The Circus company, also, played a lucrative engagement, but they are gone on their travels now. The graceful, charming, clipper-built Ella Zoyara was very popular.

Miss Caroline Richings has played during the past fortnight at Maguire's Opera House to large and fashionable audiences, and has delighted them beyond measure with her sweet singing. It sounds improbable, perhaps, but the statement is true, nevertheless.

You will hear of the Metropolitan, now, from every visitor to Washoe. It opened under the management of the new lessees, Miss Annette Ince and Julia Dean Hayne, with a company who are as nearly all stars as it was possible to make it. For instance—Annette Ince, Emily Jordan, Mrs. Judah, Julia Dean Hayne, James H. Taylor, Frank Lawlor, Harry Courtaine and Fred. Franks, (my favorite Washoe tragedian, whose name they have put in small letters in the programme, when it deserves to be in capitals—because, whatever part they give him to play,

don't he always play it well? and does he not possess the first virtue of a comedian, which is to do humorous things with grave decorum and without seeming to know that they are funny?)

The birds, and the flowers, and the Chinamen, and the winds, and the sunshine, and all things that go to make life happy, are present in San Francisco today, just as they are all days in the year. Therefore, one would expect to hear these things spoken of, and gratefully, and disagreeable matters of little consequence allowed to pass without comment. I say, one would suppose that. But don't you deceive yourself—anyone who supposes anything of the kind, supposes an absurdity. The multitude of pleasant things by which the people of San Francisco are surrounded are not talked of at all. No—they damn the wind, and they damn the dust, and they give all their attention to damning them well, and to all eternity. The blasted winds and the infernal dust—these alone form the eternal topics of conversation, and a mighty absurd topic it seems to one just out of Washoe. There isn't enough wind here to keep breath in my body, or dust enough to keep sand in my craw. But it is human nature to find fault—to overlook that which is pleasant to the eye, and seek after that which is distasteful to it. You take a stranger into the Bank Exchange and show him the magnificent picture of Sampson and Delilah, and what is the first object he notices?—Sampson's fine face and flaming eye? or the noble beauty of his form? or the lovely, half-nude Delilah? or the muscular Philistine behind Sampson, who is furtively admiring her charms? or the perfectly counterfeited folds of the rich drapery below her knees? or the symmetry and truth to nature of Sampson's left foot? No, sir, the first thing that catches his eye is the scissors on the floor at Delilah's feet, and the first thing he says, "Them scissors is too modern—there warn't no scissors like that in them days, by a d—d sight!"

(Source: Twainquotes.com, <http://www.twainquotes.com/18640623t>.)