

*Virginia City Territorial Enterprise*  
November, 1863

*Letter from Mark Twain*

*Carson City, November 7, 1863*

EDS. ENTERPRISE: This has been a busy week—a notable and a historical week—and the only one which has yet passed over this region, perhaps, whose deeds will make any important stir in the outside world. Some dozens of people in America have heard of Nevada Territory (which they vaguely understand to be in Virginia City, though they have no definite idea as to where Virginia City is) as the place which sends silver bricks to the Sanitary fund; and some other dozens have heard of Washoe, without exactly knowing whether the name refers to the Northwest passage or to the source of the Nile—but when it is shouted abroad through the land that a new star has risen on the flag—a new State born to the Union—then the nation will wake up for a moment and ask who we are and where we came from.

They will also ascertain that the new acquisition is called Nevada; they will find out its place on the map, and always recollect afterwards, in a general way, that it is in North America; they will see at a glance that Nevada is not in Virginia City and be surprised at it; they will behold that neither is it in California, and will be unable to comprehend it; they will learn that our soil is alkali flats and our shrubbery sage-brush, and be as wise as they were before; their mouths will water over statistics of our silver bricks, and verily they will believe that God createth silver in that form. This week's work is the first step toward giving the world a knowledge of Nevada, and it is a giant stride, too, for it will provoke earnest inquiry. Immigration will follow, and wild-cat advance.

This Convention of ours is well worth being proud of. There is not another commonwealth in the world, of equal population, perhaps, that could furnish the stuff for its fellow. I doubt if any Constitutional Convention ever officiated at the birth of any State in the Union which could boast of such a large proportion of men of distinguished ability, according to the number of its members, as is the case with ours.

There are thirty-six delegates here, and among them I could point out fifteen who would rank high in any community, and the balance would not be second rate in most Legislatures. There are men in this body whose reputations are not local, by any means—such as Governor Johnson, Wm. M. Stewart, Judge Bryan, John A. Collins, N. A. H. Ball, General North and James Stark, the tragedian. Such a constellation as that ought to shed living light upon our Constitution. General North is President of the Convention; Governor Johnson is Chairman of the Legislative Committee—one of the most important among the Standing Committees, and one which has to aid in the construction of every department of the Constitution; Mr. Ball occupies his proper place as Chairman of the Committee on Finance, State Debt, etc.; the Judiciary Committee is built of sound timber, and is hard to surpass; it is composed of Messrs. Stewart, Johnson, Larrowe and Bryan.

We shall have a Constitution that we need not be ashamed of, rest assured; but it will not be framed in a week. Every article in it will be well considered and freely debated upon.

And just here I would like to know if it would not be as well to get up a constitutional silver brick or so, and let the Sanitary fund rest a while. It would cost at least ten thousand dollars to put this Convention through in anything approaching a respectable style; yet the sum appropriated by the Legislature for its use was only \$3,000, and the scrip for it will not yield \$1,500. The new State will have to shoulder the present Territorial debt of \$90,000, but it seems to me we might usher her into the world without adding to this an accouchement fee—so to speak—of ten or fifteen thousand more.

Why, the Convention is so poor that it cannot even furnish newspapers for its members to read; kerosene merchants hesitate to afford it light; unfeeling draymen who haul wood to the people, scorn its custom; it elected official reporters, and for two days could negotiate no desks for them to write on: it confers upon them no spittoons, to this day; in fact, there is only one spittoon to every 7 members and they furnish their own fine-cut into the bargain; in my opinion there are not inkstands enough to go around, or pens either, for that matter; Col. Youngs, Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means (to pay expenses), has gone blind and baldheaded, and is degenerating into a melancholy lunatic; this is all on account of his financial troubles; it all comes of his tireless efforts to bullyrag a precarious livelihood for the Convention out of Territorial scrip at forty-one cents on the dollar.

Will ye see him die, when fifty-nine cents would save him? I wish I could move the Convention up to Virginia, that you might see the Delegates worried, and business delayed or brought to a standstill every hour in the day by the eternal emptiness of the Treasury. Then would you grow sick, as I have done, of hearing members caution each other against breeding expense. I begin to think I don't want the Capital at Virginia if this financial distress is always going to haunt us.

Now, I had forgotten until this moment that all these secrets about the poverty of the Convention treasury, and the inoffensive character of Territorial scrip, were revealed to the house yesterday by Colonel Youngs, with a feeling request that the reporters would keep silent upon the subject, lest people abroad should smile at us. I clearly forgot it—but it is too late to mend the matter now.

Hon. Gordon N. Mott is in town, and leaves with his family for San Francisco to-morrow. He proposes to start to Washington by the steamer of the 13th.

Mr. Lemmon's little girl, two years old, had her thigh bone broken in two places this afternoon; she was run over by a wagon. Dr. Tjader set the limb, and the little sufferer is doing as well as could be expected under the circumstances.

I used to hear Governor Johnson frequently mentioned in Virginia as a candidate for the United States Senate from this budding state of ours. He is not a candidate for that or any other office, and will not become one. I make this correction on his own authority, and, therefore, the various senatorial aspirants need not be afraid to give it full credence.

Messrs. Pete Hopkins and A. Curry have compromised with me, and there is no longer any animosity existing on either side. They were a little worried at first, you recollect, about that thing which appeared recently (I think it was in the Gold Hill News), concerning an occurrence which has happened in the great pine forest down there at Empire.

We sent our last report to you by our stirring official, Gillespie, Secretary of the Convention. I thought that might account for your not getting it, in case you didn't get it, you know.

